

FUSION

CYBER CULTURE • THE NET • MUSIC AND MORE

VRML: GOING 3-D ON THE INTERNET

CYBER SPORTS: GOING PRO WITH A PC

NEW PSX & SATURN REVIEWS

\$4.99/\$6.50/£3.00



DECKER PUBLICATIONS

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GEORGE LUCAS

THE FUSION INTERVIEW



AOL keyword: NOA
www.nintendo.com



Super Mario World 2®

Mario's back in his biggest adventure yet.

Four years in the birthing, and now this bambino comes kicking and screaming into the world of

Morphmation graphics. A Nintendo brainchild that allows

the characters and back-grounds to ripple, rubberize and react like nothing you've ever seen ('cept maybe that nasty gelatin salad your mom puts out for company).

But there's more than eye-popping visuals to drool over. There's over



Egg fights, screaming babies, vicious attacks—it's like day care from hell.



Do not adjust your television. These graphics are supposed to be wavy.



This baby's outta control.

60 levels packed with all-new surprises. Huge expanding bosses. And Yoshi — a cold-blooded baby sitter who spits fire and launches eggs out his butt. He even morphs into a helicopter...



try that with your average Lizard. And if that doesn't pacify you, there are over 130 different types of enemies.

So, you may wanna put on a fresh diaper.



This little sucker doesn't just scroll left to right. He goes all over the place (and we don't mean Number Two).



Kicking, shrieking, crying, tantrums...and that's just the guys who bought new systems.

Only for
SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

IN TODAY'S WAR BE
IT APPEARS ONE SIDE HAS



POWERED BY
namco



Tekken. More brutality for your buck.



You're looking at the fastest racing game in history. Ridge Racer.

In Air Combat, you're a mercenary on a mission. Make that 17 missions.

TWEEN 32-BIT SYSTEMS,
GAINED AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE.

FUNNY, WE THOUGHT
WE WERE JUST MAKING GAMES.



If a system is only as good as the games you play on it, we hope you got the PlayStation. Because according to critics, these are three of the best games out there, regardless of the hardware. To find out more, grab us on the web at <http://www.namco.com>. Better yet, grab a box.

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ONE OF 12 COMPUTERIZED TEAMS!

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Non-stop action everywhere you turn. It's
about bashing your opponent to get the ball...
and not getting creamed in the process. It's
simple. Move. Crush. Score. Do it again and
again. Until you are victorious and ready
for the next challenge...the next arena...
your next chance to become LOCUS.



For MS-Dos®, Windows®95, and MacOS™. To get the game:
available at your local software retailer or call 1.800.610.GTIS. You can contact
GT at: <http://www.GTINTERACTIVE.COM> To download the demo:

<http://www.zombie.com>

coming this fall!
A VIRTUAL R

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Software Corporation



ZOMBIE™



CD-ROM GAME



ING IS ABOUT YOUR PC!



ALITY SPORTSGAME

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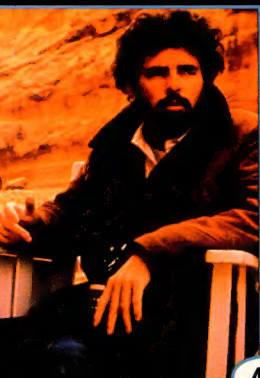
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CULTURE SHOCK

Comics, Videos, Movies, CD-ROM Mags, Games...If you can find a finer entertainment section than this one—buy it!

This young man is A) Proudly displaying a mess of fish he just caught. B) Modeling outdoor attire. C) Enjoying his formative years before the horror of adulthood consumes his soul.



CRITICAL MASS

► Welcome to another _____
(adjective)
issue of *FUSION*. Our _____
(adjective)
readers have spoken, and they
have spoken _____. The
(adverb)
response is quite _____.
(exclamation)
in fact.

Over 99 percent of _____
(species of spotted owl)
explained at _____ their
(national park)
belief in the _____ of issue
(noun)

two. On the other hand, many
others were _____
(expletive or Q-bert quote)
with our _____ Bill Gates/
(adjective)

Godzilla cover, citing its _____
(adjective)
tone to be overly _____
(Buddhist Pillar of Truth)

Many agree though that Microsoft
can _____ the _____
(verb) (noun)

Our newly revised _____
(torture device)
Culture Shock section was
another _____ for readers.
(scream of agony)

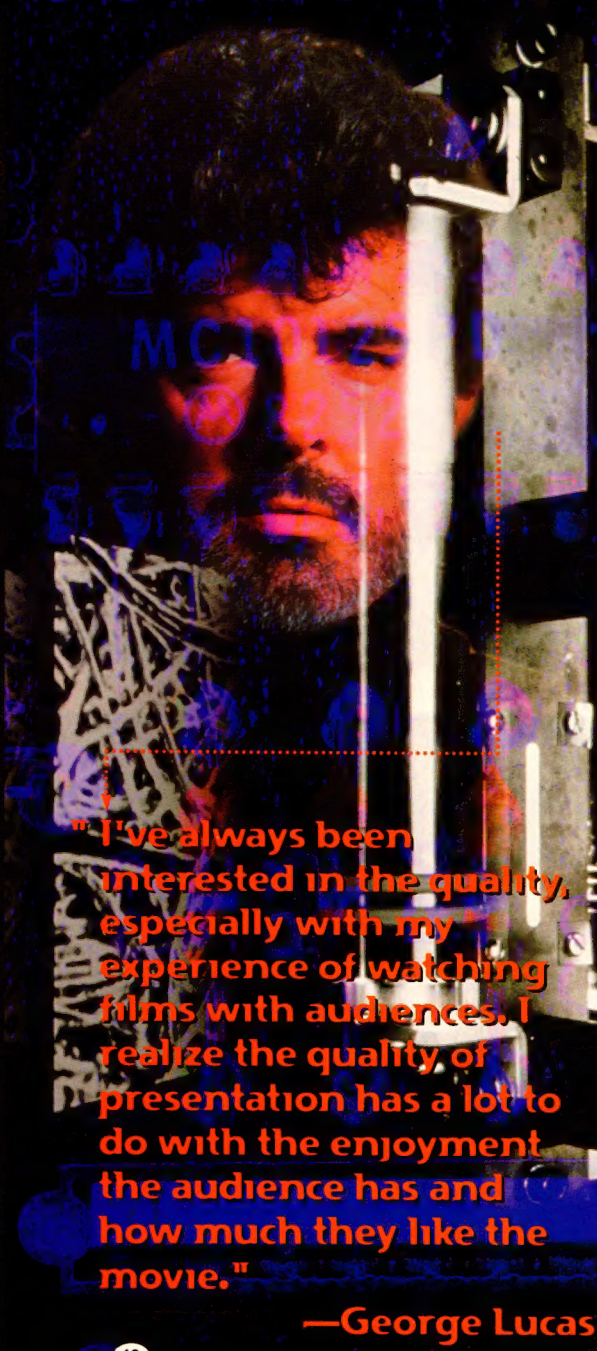
The reviews of music, video,
infotainment and game reviews
altogether were largely

(synonym for large)
Now hold on a moment. Have
you found this editorial suddenly
turning "racy"? Have some of the
words you've mentally entered
into it bordered on...obscene?

With all the concern these days
over what is and isn't appropriate
to post over the Internet (see the
update on the Exon Amendment
on p. 18), we just thought it
might be interesting to point out
that in "real life" most people
relate to each other in more
saucy terms...as well as in their
innermost thoughts.

Be careful out there.

—The Management



"I've always been
interested in the quality,
especially with my
experience of watching
films with audiences. I
realize the quality of
presentation has a lot to
do with the enjoyment
the audience has and
how much they like the
movie."

—George Lucas

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"Cyberspace is for everyone. It's not just for the rich, it's not just for the well connected, it's not just for the big companies, it's not just for the creative folk."

—Mark Pesce

"...dat' Exxon shio' is a scamp fo' crashin' dat' ship, and spillin' dat' oil into dem Alask'n waters. Clean up afta' yo' self, Sénator. Momma always told me..."

—B.B. Kurtz



Do you want to play against the pros? Or be one? 14 have had their real swings digitized into the game. Strengths and weaknesses. Although don't count on too many weaknesses. They are, after all, PGA TOUR pros.



Lee Jaffe



When you play the PGA TOUR you've got to play the championship courses. The real ones. With even more courses available to add to your tournament repertoire. Don't forget, you're playing from the blue tees.



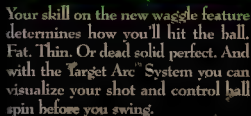
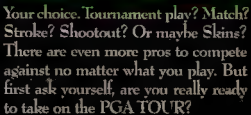
Tom Kite



Since there's no caddie, "Picture in Picture" lets you see hole fly by's, watch your shot from the ball's viewpoint, and review every hole from multiple perspectives. And you don't have to give it a percentage of your earnings.

A close-up, low-angle shot of a golf green. The foreground is dominated by the texture of the grass, which appears as a dense field of small, dark green blades. In the background, a yellow flag is visible on a pole, standing out against a blurred backdrop of trees and a clear sky. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

Hurry: what happens to an 18-inch putt when it's for a PGA TOUR championship.



Tea off soon
on 3DO™,
Sony PlayStation™
and PC-CD.

Go, Speed Racer, Go

Steve Race leaves Sony in the dust. Heads Holobyte.

So long Sony! Steve Race, 45, the erstwhile president of Sony Computer Entertainment of America (SCEA), resigned from his company post on Aug. 6, explaining, in opaque words, that he was ready to move on. Caught with their pants down, Sony executives weren't more than a month away from the much-hyped American release of the PlayStation, of which Race was responsible, and hurriedly named Martin Homlish as acting president of SCEA.

On Aug. 7, Olaf Olafsson, president of Sony Electronic Publishing, put on a Pat Sajak smile as he sweetened the changing of the guards, "...we are very fortunate to have a senior vice president [Homlish] within the Sony family with a wealth of manufacturing, distribution and marketing experience..." Rumor has it, however, that Race knocked the water cooler over on the way out the door. Or something like that, at least.

"One foot in the door, and one foot out"—that seems to be Steve Race's style according to one news source who insinuated that Race simply became

tired of his work and craved a new challenge somewhere else within the folds of an advancing software industry.

Other snooping quidnuncs suggest that Race's sudden departure was the result of a vehement disagreement with Sony of Japan on how to market the PlayStation in the U.S. Race himself reluctantly told *FUSION*, "We didn't see eye-to-eye on a variety of issues and it didn't make any sense to have as many cooks as they had in the kitchen."

Master chef Race will now run his own supper club, having signed on with software manufacturer Spectrum

Holobyte as chief executive officer. In his new role, Race will be responsible for all functions of the company, including worldwide sales, finance, operations, marketing and publishing. His personal mission: "To take Spectrum Holobyte into profitability and to take them into the next level. Spectrum is a software company that is in transition from entrepreneurial management to professional management. Last year we made \$84 million and we're now moving into crossing \$100 million in sales [a year]. That transition point comes typically for a lot of companies at that dollar mark."

The other important task for Race now, is a patching up of his relationship



Caught with their pants down, Sony executives weren't more than a month away from the much-hyped American release of the PlayStation.

with Sony. ASAP; Spectrum Holobyte is a major contributor to the PlayStation's arsenal of games. Jeff Fox, vice president of Sony Communications, dismisses news of discord between the companies and explains, "We're not worried about our relationship with Mr. Race. The best of luck to him at Spectrum. We're just very pleased to be working with him again." Best of luck? It all sounds like P.R. parlance, spoken with a gnashing of teeth.

Race will also have to ameliorate relationships with other console companies as well. Race raised eyebrows at Sega not long ago when he left that company to pursue opposing opportunities at Sony. Spectrum Holobyte is in the precarious situation now where they must count on Race's abilities to mend fences. "It's very funny. I've gone to becoming a platform agnostic when I was at Sony where I worshipped the altar of a single platform to now hoping that every platform makes it. So now all of a sudden, I'm friendly again with Tom Kalinske (Sega CEO)." Or so Race hopes.

Race purports the same sentiment about Sony and continues to praise the PlayStation. "I think it will be enormously successful. I think the system continues to be technologically the

leader in terms of next-generation systems that are out there today."

Changing topics as rapidly as he changes jobs, Race commences to discuss other items of business that are currently tickling his gray matter. Of particular appeal for Race is the Nintendo Ultra 64, scheduled to be released in the U.S. in April of 1996 at a price point of \$250. Race insinuates, in the stirred tone of his voice, that the Ultra 64 is a step beyond what Sony is presently offering in the PlayStation "There are some things that the Ultra 64 seems to do very nicely. There's no aliasing or jagged lines that you get when you draw a straight line; the lines don't look like stairsteps and it works wonderfully fast. I only had a chance to look at that system for about 15 minutes so I don't want to profess to have a great familiarity with it, but what I saw in it was a very nice product."

Again switching gears, Race remarks rather casually, "it'll be interesting," referring to his bygone Sony PlayStation, Nintendo's beefed-up Ultra 64 and other console gaming systems that will compete with one another in the months ahead—and abruptly, but not unlike all other good CEOs, Race finishes speaking with a nervous smile, his apprehensions carefully masked. Interesting indeed. ●

AROUND THE WEBIN IN 80 SECONDS

Does it take hours to download your favorite pictures of Wings Hauser on www.hauser.com? AT&T

Paradyne appears to have a solution to the lag time. GlobeSpan technology, currently in its final stages of development, promises to increase transmission speeds and enable users to receive worldwide multimedia telephone communications over copper wire phone lines.

"Instead of that 50Kb file coming at you 14Kb per second, it's going to come at you 1.5Mb per second...That's a hundred times faster," explains Beth Page, broadband consultant and communications analyst.

In addition to speedy downloading, GlobeSpan will also empower users to live live events on television, conduct video phone calls and receive movies-on-demand, all over copper wire. Garrick Case, chief spokesperson for AT&T Paradyne boasts, "If you moved to Australia, you'd be able to pick up a Yankees game."

It sounds like a blessing and a curse. Might the Australians also tap into Erkel, *Home Improvement* and *Small Wonder* reruns? Pray for them. ●

Brain Scanners

The force will be with you," or so it may seem with IBVA Technology's brain controllable multimedia and graphics. Featuring brainwave analysis software, a wireless transmitter, a one- or two-channel headband and a receiver, the technology is designed to provide a direct link between you and your computer.

For those interested in the mad-scientist software, IBVA has moved onto the Web at—<http://www.opendoor.com/pagoda/ibva.html>. Hailing from the Outer Limits, these misfits of science vaunt the first globally accessible brainwave playback system, their patented brain-to-computer interface, IBVA software and screen shots from their Step 1 CD-ROM, which stresses the brain-controllable multimedia and graphics.

"The information provided about the technology is fascinating in and of itself, but the site's most worthwhile feature is the trivial, but incredibly cool downloadable brainfiles of the '60s counterculture guru, Dr. Timothy Leary. Your mind will seem puny and insignificant in comparison. ●

POSITIONED

Sunken Software counterfeiters Pirates: faked-out by the law

Here's the Hollywood pitch: A D.A. goes undercover to expose a malevolent band of software counterfeiters who are smuggling and pirating over \$1 billion worth of illicit goods into the U.S.

It might make a good premise for the next Pierce Brosnan Bond feature or even a lousy Raquel Welch made-for-TV flick, but for Peter Beruk, a litigator with the Software Publishers Association, it's dirty business as usual.

In mid-July, Beruk and the S.P.A. announced the issuance of preliminary injunctions against five distributors allegedly caught selling illegal copies of S.P.A. member software. The software titles involved are: *Doctors Book of Home Remedies* (Compton's New Media, Inc.); *Falcon Gold*

(Spectrum Holobyte, Inc.); *Global Explorer* (DeLorme Publishing Company); *Wrath of Gods* (Luminaria, Inc.) and *DOOM II* (id Software, Inc.).

"We found out that a lot of this stuff was becoming available at the Californian trade fairs. A number of those exhibitors were actually selling counterfeit product," says an indignant Beruk. "Microsoft was finding a lot of counterfeit DOS and Windows and were primarily going after it, but this is the first time we actually saw it going down to the games or the consumer category."

Elmer Fudd-red at the whole controversy, the S.P.A. may sue for damages of up to \$100,000 per work infringed, plus court costs and attorney fees. That's horse feed compared to the permanent injunction against

further distribution of software that the defendants might face; without product to distribute, these five distributors can kiss their businesses goodbye.

Some of the distributors are employing presidential amnesia, as it were, in defense of their illicit actions, claiming to have forgotten how they first came in contact with the illicit goods. Others are more willing to cooperate and are providing all-important names of sources.

"You can kind of compare it all to drug users and drug pushers," says Beruk. "You may have to occasionally shake down some drug users to find out where they're getting drugs from and then shake down the pushers to find out who's actually growing the stuff. We're going about it the same way...we're figuring if we

start at the bottom and work our way up, we'll eventually get to where they're being manufactured."

Jumpy publishers point the finger at Hong Kong and Taiwan, but software piracy appears to be happening everywhere. The U.S. has an estimated piracy rate of 25 percent and countries like China, Russia and Thailand have estimated piracy rates of 98 percent, 95 percent and 92 percent respectively.

He's not a puritanical bluenose, but Beruk does speak with powerful condemnation. His warning to distributors: Shape up or be shipped out. "As more time goes on, the more information I get about counterfeiters. They may get away with it for a month or so, but they won't be able to get away with it forever." ●

Build that assault and battery case you always wanted to bring against your older brother, reveal silly inconsistencies in any given Grisham novel or sue your friend and have a good laugh.

The much-anticipated Lexis Counsel Connect (LCC) online service, *Lawyer Search*, the most complete directory of lawyers and law firms on the Internet, is finally here! Shapiro, Dershowitz and Cochran—all rolled into one juicy web access page (<http://www.counsel.com/lawlinks>).

Charging an abusive attorney fee of \$180, LCC allows other firms to place detailed personnel lists of their own onto the site for sublime, web-goer enjoyment. LAWlinks, a collection of law materials, is also available over the Net, offering direct access to law-related archives, electronic mail lists, databases and search tools.

It's litigation madness! ●

WEB LAWYERS

THE MOOSE IS LOOSE



If you can't catch them on the Cartoon Network, bring them to the office. Rocky & Bullwinkle and Friends, the greatest troupe of wits and half-wits are now part of a screen saver for the PC.

Ocean of America's software allows the user to view classic cartoon bits, take a tour of Bullwinkle's college campus, Wossamotta U. and learn meaningless minutiae while

playing the Rocky and Bullwinkle trivia challenge.

The moose and squirrel are amusing, but the wicked Boris and Natasha lend the real entertainment to the screensaver. Most notable: seeing and hearing Natasha, in her vexatious and a la mode manner, yell, "Kill the moose!" Reason enough to purchase the

\$15 software. ●

USE YOUR BRAIN... OR LOSE YOUR MIND!



BURN:CYCLE

CD-ROM ACTION ADVENTURE GAME

MATURE
M
AGES 17+

PHILIPS

**The original cinematic action
adventure game,
where engrossing game play
meets Blade Runner-style action.**

**Plunge into this surrealistic 3D
world where dozens of
characters propel you through
mind expanding challenges,**

to one shocking conclusion!

For Macintosh and PC Windows®

<http://www.burncycle.com>

Making New Waves In Radio

Earthen, a new age in rock has begun. Xing Technology has introduced Streamworks, a new software that enables customers to broadcast live and on-demand audio and video over a broad range of network topologies including Ethernet, ATM, FDDI, ISDN, T1 and Frame Relay.

Originally developed for NBC and Reuters for broadcast of financial news programming, Streamworks can compress audio with either CD-quality MPEG compression or Xing's unique Low Bit Rate compression technology that offers the industry's highest quality sound at 9600 baud modem rates.

For radio stations, this means the difference between transmitting signals to a given region or the millions of worldwide Net surfers that inhabit the Internet community. Previously, also means that fans of the upstart Christian Slater teen flick, *Pump Up the Volume*, can live out their freedom-rock fantasies over an unregulated broadcast network.

"Probably 30-40 percent of our users are overseas," boasts Howard Gordon, president of Xing Technology. "I know with KRPG, when they did a benefit concert [over the Internet], they were getting messages from Taiwan, Korea, Australia, the Netherlands and all over the place. We're only beginning to imagine all of the applications for this."

The "interest in tuning in to live broadcast broadcasts can download free Streamworks software at <http://xing-tech.com>."

MAN ON THE STREET

Sen. Exon's telecommunications bill is worrying many Internet users with the questions it raises in regard to First Amendment rights and free speech. From Yellow Poplar Junction, Miss., FUSION correspondent Billy Bob Kurtz reports on local sentiment.



Tele-Incommunicado Where is Senator Exon's bill now?

89-16. That was the final vote on the Senate floor in favor of Sen. Exon's Telecommunications Bill. Since that time, the Nebraska politician's Washington office has been inundated with phone calls from First Amendment rights activists, and more aggressively, from repressed, pornography-hungry Internet scavengers. Fearing a loss of free speech, and more importantly, free nude pictures of women, Net users from around the world are responding vehemently to the bill's proposed amendments—of greatest concern, a \$100,000 maximum fine and a jail sentence of up to two years for the misuse of a computer to spread obscene or harassing material.

To those who are hot and bothered over the whole hurrah, Sen. Exon's Press Secretary, Russ Rader says, simmer down! "There would be no censorship," he explains. "It would be an issue of the providers of this [sexually explicit] material making a reasonable effort to make sure children are not accessing indecent or obscene material. If they take those steps, they would not be held liable."

And what are those steps? "Viewers would have to provide a credit card number or some kind of proof to show that they were over 18 to access the area."

Presently, the bill is being scrutinized by a conference committee (made up of members from both the House and the Senate) to work out differences between Exon's bill and the amendments proposed

by Rep. Cox (R-Calif.) and Rep. Wideman (D-Ore.). As it's presently scripted, Cox's and Wideman's bill completely bars the government from restricting any kind of pornography over the Net, leaving it to the industry to develop protective software. Exon feels that the two bills don't have to be mutually exclusive, asserting a need for both the development of protective software and laws to act as deterrents.

Exon, however, will run aground when it comes to regulating pornographic sites placed on the web in other countries. "The senator realizes this and knows that this is not a panacea," Rader explains. "A number of other countries, however, are closely watching what happens in the United States and [Exon's] hoping that there will be some kind of international cooperation."

Resolution to the debate won't happen for a couple of months to come, but Capitol Hill insiders are confident that the bill will pass, in one form or another. For those with constructive advice, Exon's office welcomes your calls.





AMERICA'S LARGEST KILLER OF TIME™

ZOOP - YOU MAY ALREADY BE ADDICTED



No one is immune



Resting



Output of the Heart
(gallons of blood per minute)
when man is:



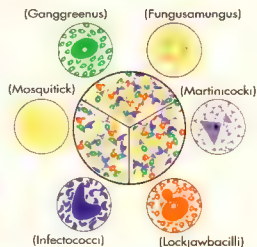
Walking



Playing Zoop



(zoopx10¹⁰)

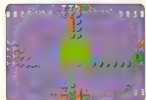


A healthy Iris

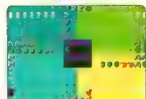


The same Iris
after Zoop

The stages of Zoop
(what to look for)



[Level 3]



[Level 6]

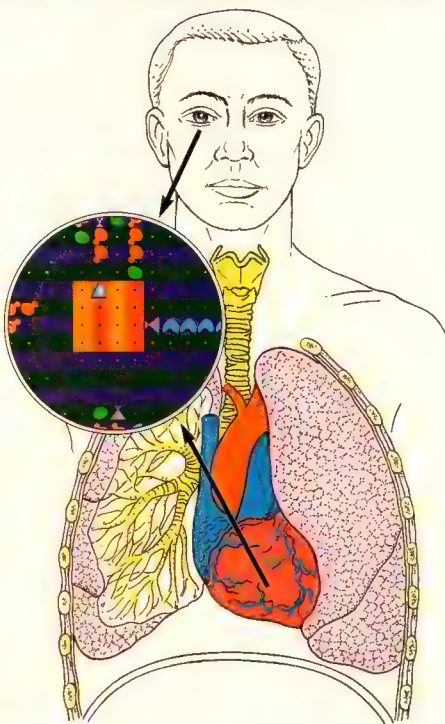


[Level 9]



[Level 72]

(this pattern continues on, and sadly
always leads to one's demise)



It looks like a harmless video game until it enters the bloodstream and mixes with your DNA. In order to eradicate this affliction we must learn its moves, understand its thinking and anticipate its next move. Only then can we begin to battle and conquer this killer.

**Known carriers
of Zoop**



Genesis™



Super NES™



Game Boy™



Game Gear™



Macintosh™



PC

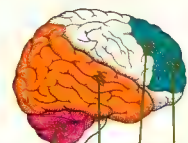


PlayStation™



Saturn™

**How Zoop affects
the brain**



It slowly
eats at the
Cerebellum
restricting:
movement,
coordination,
balance

It attacks
the frontal
lobes of the
Cerebrum
impairing:
judgement,
higher learning,
reason

It mutates the Medulla
causing irregular:
digestion, respiration,
heartbeat



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...FUSION STOCK MONITOR

The stock index rallied 20 percent in July, following a 25 percent hike in June. Leadership was taken over by the cartridge publisher sector up 31 percent, while PC-related companies were up more than 24 percent. Retail stocks flattened after a 30 percent rise in June.

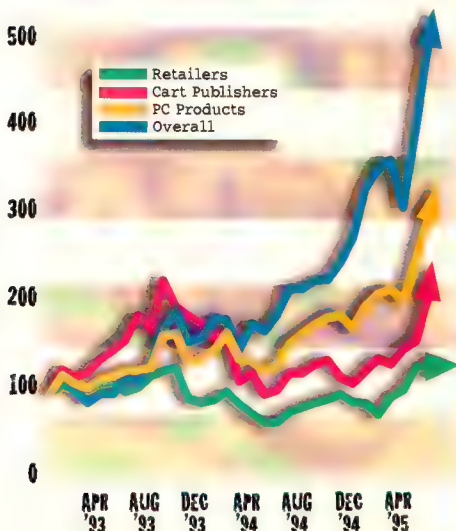
Among individual stocks, the biggest stars included T³HQ, up 75 percent on news of strong licenses for portable cartridges; Sierra On-Line up 46 percent on strong June results and anticipation of Phantas-magoria; Davidson up 33 percent as ramp-up began on the Toys 'R' Us distribution contract. Game publishers Electronic Arts and Acclaim rose 33 percent and 29 percent respectively, on better-than-anticipated earnings and optimism about new platform sales this fall. Other gainers included 3DO, up 18 percent on reports of sales growth after the price cut to \$299. Broderbund and WMS were both up 13 percent as investors

anticipate strong product introductions for the holidays.

Only three stocks had lower prices at month's end than in June; Creative Technology was off 25 percent after announcing writeoffs and disappointing earnings, Neostar was down 11 percent on profit taking after a 50 percent increase in the two previous months, and Egghead dipped 2 percent.

Although investors have been anticipating the launch of new game platforms for several months, we will finally begin to get a sense of real demand during the next two months. The three key investment questions are: 1) will \$300-plus game machines find a mass market, 2) will the PC be the next-generation mass-market game platform and 3) how quickly will Windows 95 be adopted? ●

FUSION Stock Monitor is compiled by John G. Taylor, an interactive entertainment industry analyst with Portland, OR-based Arcadia Investment Corporation



By the Numbers

- # According to Veronis, Reuter & Associates, in 1994, consumer spending was nearly equal on purchases of PC multimedia software and online services at approximately \$1.4 billion each.
- # Instinet reports that commercial online services will continue to grow over the next five years, despite growth in the World Wide Web. By 1997, Instinet estimates that online services will become a \$3.5 billion-plus industry.
- # According to another Instinet report, shipments of 32-Bit and 64-Bit video game consoles will increase from 4.8 million units in 1995 to almost 10 million by the year 2000.
- # A 1995 Masco Interactive poll indicates that 6 out of 10 adults take two to four trips

CONFUSION

Comdex/Asia at Singapore Informatics Oct. 26-28, 1995, Singapore International Convention Centre, Singapore; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade only.

Comdex/Fall Nov. 13-17, Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade only.

International Winter CES Jan. 5-8, 1996, Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV; call (703) 907-7600. Trade only.

Comdex/PacRim Jan. 16-18, 1996, Vancouver Trade & Convention Centre, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade only.

UniForum Feb. 14-16, 1996, Moscone Center, San Francisco, CA; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade only.

New Media Expo Feb. 27-29, 1996, Los Angeles Convention Center, Los Angeles, CA; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade only.

For more information regarding convention dates, contact: <http://www.eia.org/ceg> and <http://www.comdex.com>

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multimedia 886 Creative

Eyes Still without A Face

The Residents once a whole new freakshow

Those damn, naked wackos back, and this time with a new CD.

(Gingerbread Man), CD-ROM (Bad Day on the Midway), and would you believe, an opera (Freakshow Live).

The Residents, still hidden in anonymity, bestow publicity to their reluctant spokesman (and band member) Hardy Fox. "From there, we're sort of out of view, there are no new songs, but new happenings are being pushed notes out and there," he says of their experience with that musical style.

Letting the band for their eerie circus-tent environment in the CD-ROM *Bad Day at the Midway*. The Residents again explore the relationships between a group of freakish carnival inhabitants. "You've got people like Dagmar the Dogwoman. Dagmar is covered with tattoos of dogs. Her act is a striptease and she reveals her tattoos one at a time. And each dog tattoo has a man's name on it, and she tells a story of a relationship with a man gone bad."

Fox describes the CD-ROM as an interactive movie that incorporates a kind of "fuzzy logic" or artificial intelligence. "The characters in the CD-ROM aren't just interacting with the user, but also with the other characters in the program."

Stranger yet, is the band's October-scheduled operatic version of the popular CD-ROM, *Freakshow*. Premiering in Prague, an all-female cast will give voice to the peculiar story of carnival oddballs. Those crazy Czechs, Hasselhoff and now this.

Finally, here's the release of the *Gingerbread Man*, a collection of eerie, if not depressing, tales that vary from *The Dying Oilman's Story* to *The Confused Transsexual's Story*.

"Gingerbread Man enters the minds of various people with problems and delves deeply into their paranoia. It has a little song that each character sings in their mind and then goes into the utter chaos and confusion of their inner workings."

Right, okay, whatever you say guys. ●

Bits, Bytes and Buzz...

Creative Labs Inc. is banking on the success of their 3-D *Blaster*, a graphics display card that delivers 640X480 resolution by 16-Bit color at 30 frames per second. Titles shipping with 3-D *Blaster* this month include EA/Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet Plus*, Papyrus' *NASCAR* and Mindscape's *Cybersled* and *Azreal's Tear...Catapult Entertainment and Blockbuster Video* will increase the number of retail outlets carrying *XBAND Video Game Network* to all Blockbuster stores, with *XBAND* for Super NES and Genesis early this October. **Looking Glass Technologies, Inc.** turned down an offer from Viacom

New Media to develop *Star Trek* franchise property software. In a wily move, Viacom later purchased a large percentage of Looking Glass, in essence, bullying the company to work on the *Star Trek* software. **Concentric Research Corp.** will be expanding their 130 dial-in points of presence to 230 sometime in October, good news for gamers who use the system in search of online competitors. **Sega of America** will ship its portable version of *Genesis*, the *Nomad* (\$200), in limited distribution starting in October. **id Software** acknowledged recently that the original title to the smash hit *Doom* was *It's Green and Pissed*. ●

The Old IN's & OUT's

Hello Kitty

The Real World

Sturpice

Star Trek

"As If"

Shannon Doherty

Heroine

cybersex

Phil Gramm

pagars

Courtney Love

Morrissey

e-mail

Walmart

aromatherapy

Frank Sinatra

Kerippo

The Adventures of Pete and Pete

Snoopy Snow Cone Machine

Space Ghost

"Chal"

Alicia Silverstone

Heroines

romance

Teddy Grahams

walkie-talkies

G. Love

Alanis Morrisette

snailmail

Target

incense

Dean Martin

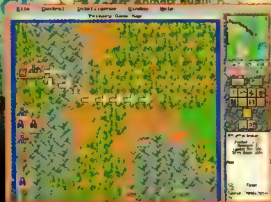
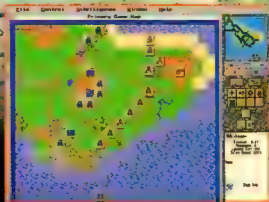
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OF THE FUTURE
ARE THE
EMPIRES OF
THE MIND."**

WINSTON CHURCHILL

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MARK BALDWIN
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SITUATION MAP



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THE REACTOR

A GUIDE TO THE STARS OF THE INTERACTIVE STAGE

Author! Author!

The Web Welcomes Literary Illuminati

▶ **Thou art a hasty-witted artless ratsbane!**



Afraid to bandy words with your friend's coterie of forked-tongued, East Coast, Ivy Leaguers? Let William Shakespeare, master of the four-letter word, teach you the art of swearing. By accessing the *Personalized Shakespearean Insult Service* at <http://www.preferred.com/~joey/insult.html>, you too can learn, and at the same time, challenge the 16th-century poet in a duel of filthy utterances and nasty scuttlebutts. Don't be a tickle-brained, folly fallen, idle-headed, rump-fed wheyface. Stand up for yourself. Learn how to call your opponents things of which they've never dreamed. ●

Spinning Yarns

You've just finished your latest novel, *Little Women II: The Armageddon*, but New York publishers just aren't biting. Don't dismay because there's still hope for your unappreciated work of literary madness. The *Arachnoid Writer's Alliance*, an online coalition of writers, provides would-be authors with an interactive library through which one may publish and store finished work.

All you need to do is fill out an easy-to-follow order form, including pictures, bios and contact information. To share your genius with the world, go to the AWA site at: <http://www.vena.com/arachnoid>. ●

"Language Is a Virus..."

The Net wouldn't be complete without a William S. Burroughs homepage. <http://www.hyperreal.com/wsb/>. Delight in his raspy and droll musings on the technological age, peruse his literary works and scroll through his many recordings, including film and video appearances. Other notable authors worth checking out on the web are: Piers Anthony (<http://www.best.com/~wooldri/wooldri/Xanth.html>), Jane Austen (<http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~churchh/jane-info.html>), Lewis Carroll (<http://www.wonderland.org/>

www.lehigh.edu/~nat2/kerouac.html), Cleo Odzer (<http://mosaicechony.com/~cleo>) and J.R.R. Tolkien (<http://www.math.uni-hamburg.de/~relippert/tolkien/routpage.html>). ●



ICE Cube **ON SATURN:**

"MAYBE YOU THINK YOU

People are always coming up to us at Sega and asking,

KNOW WHO I AM. "Why are you so angry?"

Okay, no one's ever asked us that. But CHECK IT:

Sega Saturn is new. **HOW I SEE THINGS.**

So if you think you know what it's like,

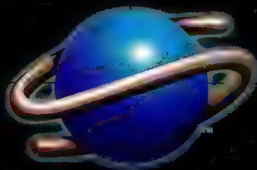
OR HOW I FEEL. IT'S NOT LIKE THAT.

It shares the same architecture as \$20,000 arcade systems,

MAYBE IF I WRITE IT, OR

but Sega Saturn pumps the hottest arcade titles straight to

your reflexes for a fraction of the cost.



You're welcome. With a gameplay experience

GET ON THE MIKE, that grabs you and

pulls you in, it's no wonder the best games are:

YOU'LL UNDERSTAND only on Sega Saturn.

Like intense sports titles with everything but the jock itch.

And this Christmas, **EXACTLY**

Sega Saturn will have the most electrifying library of EXCLUSIVE

WHAT I'M LIKE... games on the planet.

Games no one else has. So don't go thinking you know what

I DON'T THINK SO.

Sega Saturn is like before you've even experienced it.

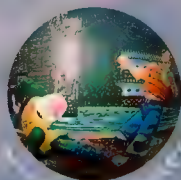
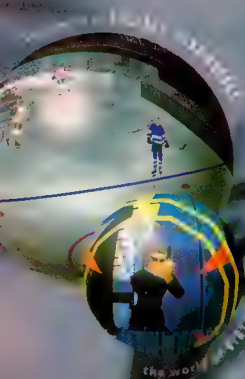
And never judge a package by its rapper.

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HEAD FOR SATURN



To learn more about the Sega Saturn, call 1-800-SEE-SATURN or email segsaturn@sega.com or on the world-wide web at <http://www.sega.com> or on Compuserve at 76543210. For more game play help, call 1-800-SEE-SATURN (S. 35/min. or S. 45/min. [live]) Call 1-800-451-5428 in Canada (S. 35/min. [live/recorded]). You must be 18 or older, or have your parent's permission. Land-line phone required. Sega Saturn and Sega Saturn logo are trademarks of SEGA unless otherwise noted below. Virt and the Virtua logo are registered trademarks of the National Hockey League. Team names and logos depicted are officially licensed Trademarks of the National Hockey League, National Hockey League Players Association and the logo of the NHLPA are registered trademarks of the NHLPA and are used under license by SEGA. © 1995 SEGA, INC. Box 8007 Redwood City, CA 94063. All Rights Reserved.



SO HERE'S A WORD OF UNLUCKY PEOPLE WHO CASH ON A BRAND K.I. CLEARLY DELIVERS ON 16-BIT, DOWN TO



AOL @ keyword: NOA
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Plus, act now and a game music CD is free. So even your stereo gets loads of merciless pummeling.



The only thing you need is an SNES...
OK and maybe a tourniquet.



It's gonna be a bloody free-for-all... and that's just in the game aisle at the store.



Fully rendered graphics mean fully rendered pain.



Carnage... mayhem...exploding corpuscles...fun for the whole family!(Not.)

SYMPATHY TO ALL THE DROPPED LOTS OF NEW SYSTEM, WHEN THE ARCADE FEEL THE LAST SPLATTER.

Fold

To Complete The Message,
Fold So "X" Meets "Y"



Fold



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...and pick
your weapons...



...just don't
pick your scabs.



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SUPER NINTENDO

Even though others might say
the end is near for 16-bit
...this sucker'll kill that feud.

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

SPORTS

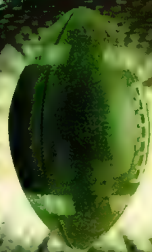


GETTING IN THE GAME!



by THE EDITORS OF FUSION

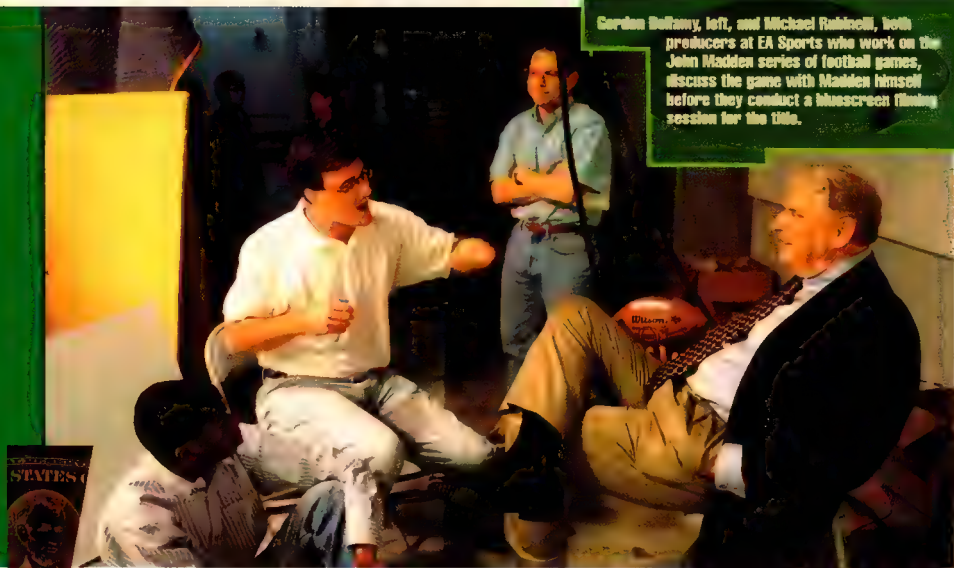
THE FIGHT FOR THE INTERACTIVE SPORTS GAMING DOLLAR



"CASH IS GOD, AND GOD IS CASH!"



Gordon Belfamy, left, and Michael Rubinoff, both producers at EA Sports who work on the John Madden series of football games, discuss the game with Madden himself before they conduct a bluescreen filming session for the title.



ong before they were having power luncheons to sign big-name athletes to lucrative video game contracts, electronic entertainment big-shots were like most kids. They dreamed of hitting the game-winning homer, throwing a touchdown pass or bringing a stadium full of

screaming fans to their feet with a colossal dunk in the NBA finals and then went about their everyday business.

Now that this situation is their everyday business, a lot of these dreams have been replaced by nightmares of heaving air-balls, fumbling at the goal line or grounding into a rally-killing double play.

A thin line separates the thrill of victory from the agony of defeat, and the winners

and losers aren't all on the playing field. Along with the team owners, players and coaches are the companies that spin the wheel in the multibillion-dollar sports market as all of their interests become intertwined.

The selling of Deion Sanders demonstrates the power of sports licenses. Neon isn't just a two-sport man; he's a triple threat. Besides football and baseball, Sanders (already inked by Sega for a video game) is a heavy hitter in the licensing game, too.

"Cash is God, and God is cash," says sportscaster Jim Rome about the sports business. "Deion Sanders is an international conglomerate. He has to play

Shaq World

Online

One way to score with an online area is to make a slam dunk with a star.

Management Plus has created a site on the Microsoft Network built around the world of basketball superstar Shaquille O'Neal. "It encompasses all aspects of Shaq, as well as things that Shaquille's fans and core-group consumers are interested in, such as rap music, entertainment and basketball in general," explains Beth Schueler, VP of marketing for the new enterprise. "So it won't be Shaq-specific in every category. It will go beyond Shaq O'Neal into all these arenas that he's involved in: movies, interviews with stars, music, reading. There'll be a kid's network where kids can go in and do things. There'll be bulletin boards, information, live chat, fantasy role-playing."

One of the chief things the line offers is Shaq himself. The NBA's center of attraction will be online and available at certain times.

Shaq World will be up and running in mid-September, after a shakedown month of testing, with four or five different rooms. The first is, obviously, basketball. The B-ball Room gives access to the league stars and the team's daily diary. The Show features entertainment, such as music, movies, TV and videos. Cyber Shop sells merchandise. Shaq Attack Paq is geared to kids, with games (such as Hangman), mail and downloadable photographs and screen savers.

Management Plus Enterprises is working on the project with Magnet Interactive, a company that creates online solutions for content providers, as well as developing entertainment software. ●

Microsoft's... it up with... Shaquille O'Neal...



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"JUST MOWIN' DUDES DOWN



'TIL THAT ORANGE MEANY WAXED ME."

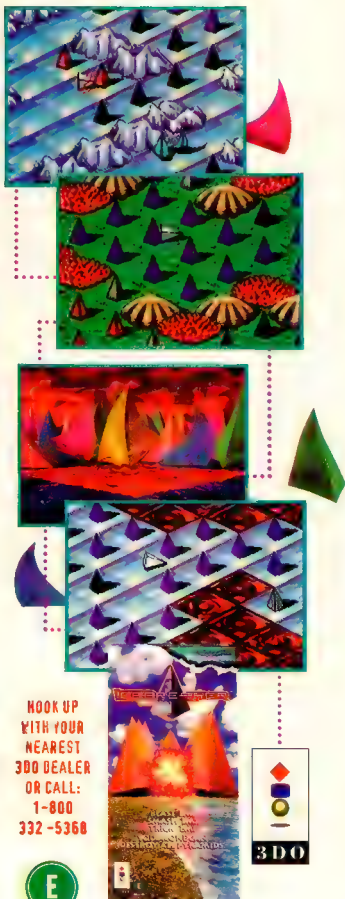
An Experience from the REAL 3DO Zone™, Lovie "The Worm", OH

ICEBREAKER



"Orange Meany? I don't think so. These bad boys are downright nasty! The dude took two to the chest, split in half and kept on rockin'. What's a guy to do? I mean we're talkin' thumbs on fire. My heart's pounding, and I'm drippin' sweat. But I'm addicted. I'm clearin' this board.

150 levels, monster tunes and screamin' pyramids I'm goin' full-titt, baby! See ya on the grid." ■



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Charting the Hit\$

Software analysts agree: The John Madden license cuts everything else in gaming today. John Madden's name on Electronic Arts' football games helps push sales to the top and keep them there, with over a million units sold per year.

Sports entertainment software sells well, whether for consoles or computers. Sports titles are often the line leaders for the companies that produce them. That makes sports gaming a big business.

Licenses combine with good design to pave the road to the charts. Whether it's a top name, like Madden and Griffey, or a major league, buyers demand a big-name connection. If this list shows one thing, it's that big names make big hits—if the game stacks up, too.

The software industry lacks a central

clearing house to track and tabulate sales. Each company keeps its own sales figures. Some chains, such as Babbages and Electronics

Boutique, create their own statistics of game sales, based on what happens to their own inventory. There are a couple of other outfits that try to get a handle on game sales by polling store managers.

To learn which games lead the pack, FUSION's editors created a combined list with estimates of their combined console and PC software sales. ●

1. *Madden NFL*; Electronic Arts; 1,000,000+ per year.
2. *Ken Griffey, Jr. Presents: MLB*; Nintendo; 900,000+ per year.
3. *NHL '95*; Electronic Arts; 800,000.
4. *NBA Live '95*; Electronic Arts; 750,000.
5. *NBA Jam*; TE; Acclaim; 700,000.
6. *Links Pro*; Access; 500,000+ per year.
7. *Full Throttle*; LucasArts; 400,000.
8. *NASCAR Racing*; Papyrus; 350,000.
9. *HardBall*; Accolade; 325,000.
10. *Tony LaRussa Baseball*; SSI; 300,000.

sophisticated graphics and colors make for a better gaming experience.

"Sports gaming is as strong as ever. It's gaining shares in a declining market," agrees Larry Marcus of Alan Brown Sons. "This goes across the board, both in console and CD multimedia, although console games are more fun to play."

"They've held up in the face of uncertainty in the console field," Marty Levine explains, "because of the universal appeal of sports. The natural competitive aspects work well with

In\$ide the Electronic Sport\$ Boom

The competitive fire that burns so fiercely in athletes is what keeps sports games strongest on console systems.

"It's mostly because people like to play sports games against one another, and that's tough to do on the PC," claims Peterson. "With video games, you're on a larger screen, a television set. You're in the living room comfortably seated on a couch instead of in a den on a little screen alone."

"It's no accident that a golf game was among the initial titles rolled out on the Sega Saturn," says Marty Brochstein, *Consumer Multimedia Report*. "Sports is a driving category of console game sales and to some extent for CD-ROM sales, although PC technology is less optimized for them, but it's a natural genre."

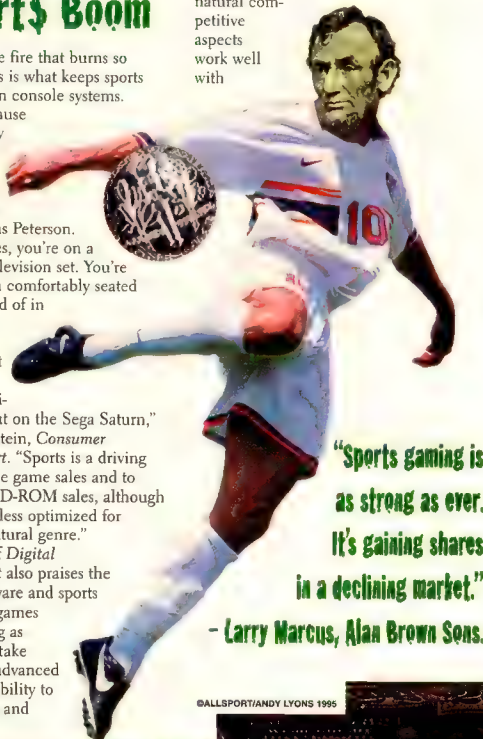
Marty Levine of *Digital Technology Report* also praises the marriage of hardware and sports software. "Sports games appear to be doing as much or more to take advantage of the advanced platforms. Their ability to handle fast action and

both sports. I don't think he even likes baseball!"

Rome's point is central to sports licensing: Prime Time is a much more valuable commodity, because he brings the marketability of a two-sport name to the table. There wouldn't be a Sanders game license without that baseball-football synergy.

As a baseball player, Sanders isn't in the same class as Frank Thomas (*Big Hurt Baseball*/Acclaim/Genesis, SNES) or Ken Griffey, Jr. (*Ken Griffey Baseball*/Nintendo/SNES). He is a great football player, but the next defensive back who gets his own game will be the first. As a two-sport major leaguer, Deion Sanders got an undisclosed, but reportedly hefty, package from Sega.

In spite of his incredible talent and the hype that follows him everywhere he goes, Deion Sanders is not yet a threat to John Madden, king of the sports celebrity licenses. "I wouldn't be surprised if John Madden has made more money off his EA license than he made as coach. He's sold millions of units!" declares Bob Peterson, Piper Jaffray, Minneapolis, Minn.



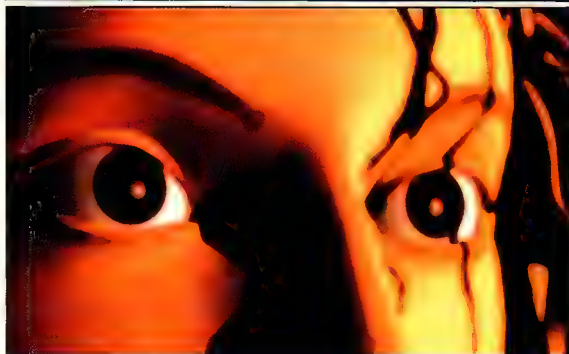
"Sports gaming is as strong as ever. It's gaining shares in a declining market."

- Larry Marcus, Alan Brown Sons.

BALLSPORT/ANDY LYONS 1995

"THE

LUCKY



ONES

ARE

DEAD."

An Experience from the REAL 3DO Zone™, Dave "Bungee Boy", PA

D



"Laura's not so lucky—she's got to live the nightmare. And I'm living it with her. We have to find out why her father went berserk and blew away a hospital full of patients. Or how to escape the moving wall of spikes that's poised an eyelash away from her face. The lifeless bodies littering this place aren't giving any answers. Graphics and sound so terrifying I got my back to the wall and the doors propped shut. No sleep tonight. See you on the other side." ■

HOOK UP WITH YOUR NEAREST 3DO DEALER OR CALL: 1-800-332-5360



W
A
P



Panasonic
Software Company

IN THE HUDDLE WITH MIKE DITKA

Don't expect Mike Ditka to approach his second try at electronic sports like Chandler, in *Friends*, meeting a new woman. A hard-nosed player, a strong-willed coach and a candid commentator, Mike Ditka has plunged into his new association with Digital Pictures on *Quarterback Attack with Mike Ditka* like Barry Sanders crashing through a defensive line. Whatever the finished product is like, count on it to reflect Ditka's blue-collar work ethic and dedication to pigskin realism.

Accolade's *Ditka Football* wasn't much, though the field-level perspective eventually caught on in later, better games. *Quarterback Attack* is still pre-alpha, but Ditka is determined to reverse his earlier misadventure.

One element the old and new Ditka titles share is authenticity. "There's a little bit of entertainment, but there's a lot of realism," he says of *Quarterback Attack*, available for the PC, Macintosh, Saturn and 3DO in November. "I think it's pretty damn realistic myself." He pauses before issuing a fair warning: "If a person doesn't want to be yelled at—don't buy the game!"

Ditka responds to sincerity and dedication, qualities he exemplified as an all-pro tight end in the 1960s. That's the strategy DP used to bag Ditka for the multiplayer format project.

"The Digital game came to me with an idea, a whole different concept," Ditka says. "It's an interactive thing where you're

video game players."

"The sports games have increased in surveyed household sales share of 16-Bit game titles over the last three years," reports Gary Gablehouse, CEO of Fairfield Research. "It's largely due to strong increases in SNES titles. Genesis had a higher share to start with, but it has stayed fairly flat.

"The SNES sports share rose from 5 per-

cent in the first person. They felt I was the person to relate to the quarterback... the way I handle people.

"I can't get too technical, because I'm not a technician, but I think the realism will be impressive to people."

Although not a gamer, Ditka has tried most of the products out there. They're good as far as they go, Ditka asserts, but he sees their limitations, too. "It's the human factor," he says. "You cannot duplicate the real thing. The reason you can't is that you can't put a finger on what a human is going to do in certain situations under pressure. His reactions may be exceptional, or his reactions may be poor, because, you know, pressure bothers anybody. It gets very hard to say what the hell is gonna happen in real life."

What *Quarterback Attack* tries to do, within the context of an interactive experience on a screen, is provide first-person point of view of actions that accurately reflect the professional sport. "Some games build in things that sometimes you wonder

cent in the fourth quarter of 1992 to 20 percent in Q4/93 and 23 percent in Q4/94. In the second quarter

of 1995, sports games hit 27 percent of SNES games sold. In the same periods, the Genesis began with 30 percent in 1992, had 31 percent in 1993 and hit 33 percent in 1994. In the second quarter of 1995, however, the share was just 30 percent. Thus sports and sports-related games currently account for about 29 percent of household 16-Bit purchases.

"The multimedia market lags well

why," he observes. "I played a couple of them where the ball bounced everywhere, and then the receiver picked it up and ran it in for a touchdown!" He vows that *Quarterback Attack* won't offer such ridiculous sequences.

Ditka predicts that future football sims will further improve the level of personal involvement. "I want people to understand the force with which the people out there on the field can hit," states Ditka. "I'd want to give game players that first hand idea of how fast these people are moving and how hard they're hitting each other. When you're watching on TV you don't know that.

"The person playing the game never gets to experience that. They're moving people around, but they don't understand how hard those bumps are!"

behind this," says Gablehouse. "CD-ROM's share of sports games is disappointingly small and getting smaller. In fourth-quarter 1993 they held about a 15 percent share of surveyed household purchases of game CDs. In the first Q of '94, there was only one sports-related title in the top 25, *Microsoft Golf*. In the second Q there were none. In the fourth quarter, sports games took a 9 percent share. In this year's second Q, sports games had only a 6 percent share: the highest rank for any sports-related title was NASCAR Racing, and it ranked 40th. The reasoning is uncertain—no one knows whether the consumers are leading developers or vice versa."



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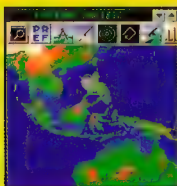
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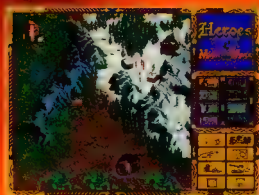


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\$licing The License Pie

Deion Sanders probably doesn't play two sports solely to improve his position as a licensable property. Still, it has to figure in his decision. The money from such sources looms larger than his salaries as a pro competitor.

In today's rapidly expanding market, those contracts have a golden glow. Interactive electronic entertainment publishers don't broadcast the dollar value of individual licensing deals. Even the league and players' groups in baseball, football, basketball and hockey, which have uniform prices for the whole industry, make small accommodations about side issues if the negotiating chemistry is right. Each company cherishes the belief that they've outwitted rivals and won unique concessions. Some have done exactly that, and the rest are happy with their illusions. As with player contracts, the media can only speculate about the exact numbers.

Publishers of baseball sims and entertainment products have benefited from the licensors' more cooperative attitude. Neither Major League Baseball (MLB) nor the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA), despite their tough guy reps, have been much more reasonable and sympathetic this time around.

It's no wonder! Baseball's bargaining position has deteriorated alarmingly since the 1994 strike. The so-called National Pastime is singing the empty-seat blues instead of "The Star Spangled Banner"—and has lost 20-25 percent of its fan appeal.

"Baseball-related business have suffered from 10 percent to as much as 40-50 per-

cent loss," states John Brazier, president of Sports Associates, Inc. (SAI). The company, formerly known as MicroLeague Interactive, markets statistical sports simulations and sports-themed entertainment titles under the MicroLeague and Time Out Sports brand names. "That's why some companies have declined to issue a baseball product this year."

"If you want to test out where the market for baseball is at," says Dave Holt, president and founder of MicroSports, Inc., "ask Major League Properties. Look how much money they've lost!"

It's not exactly a fire sale. The licensors haven't cut their demands for royalties, says Holt, "but they're easier to talk to."

"The players' association has been more than cooperative," John Brazier acknowledges. "They've shown more flexibility this year than I have ever experienced from them."

According to executives from several companies, the MLBPA has responded positively to the needs of companies that lost big sales during the strike.

They understand that they've got to share the blame, and they're trying to work with the companies. Specifically, MLBPA is giving companies that didn't sell enough games some badly needed leeway to offset the advance. Otherwise, more than one small sports publisher might go under the hammer.

Sports licensing deals share a common structure, even when the details differ. It's an advance against royalties. The low-ball price is 5 percent of gross. Juicy properties like Vince McMahon Jr.'s Titan Sports, which operates the World Wrestling Federation, can pin publishers to the mat and make them submit. They rake in 15 percent or more.

That's about the same as a development house would get for designing and programming the whole game! Apparently the game makers could learn something more than sports from the ballplayers.

The advance used to be the deal clincher. Licensors buzzed around publishers like Mel Brooks' character in *The Producers* stalking an investor. The licensors had no faith in interactive entertainment, so they all wanted the bread up front.

It was stone-age deal making. The process was to frame an agreement as quickly as possible with the publisher waving the most green and get the check.

Many deals lasted one or two years. That let the licensor re-enter the market and open the bidding again. Few video game or computer software companies managed to release more than one title within the span of the license, so every product brought the





licensor another advance payment.

The emphasis is shifting as the potential royalties pyramid. Owners of the gilt-edged licenses have learned to look before they leap.

"I think everybody's getting smarter," observes Stan Roach, executive vice president of Accolade. Roach, who helped make sports gaming licenses go big time with his *Larry Bird* and *Julius Erving Go One on One* deal at Electronic Arts, is Accolade's point man in negotiations with powerhouse licensors like the Major League Baseball Players Association and the NFL.

"The licensors now perceive themselves as making money from the royalties of good sales, not the advances," he says. "The advances, while they do provide a safety net, are tolerable to the manufacturers. Everyone understands that you only make real money if sales get beyond the advances and start earning out."

Owners of sports-centered properties are scrapping their hit-and-run strategy in favor of greater commitment to development. "I think licensors are beginning to understand that what makes for great sales—and therefore good royalties—is

In the never-ending quest to help our readers get more for their gaming buck, the editors at FUSION stacked the premiere issues of two new sports gaming mags against each other. The battle was as fast and furious as a couple of hungry pit bulls fighting over a severed arm, but when the smoke cleared, as our results show, one went away a little less hungry than the other. To make it a fair fight, however, we've got to tell you that **CYBERSPORTS** is published by the same parent company as **FUSION**. After the company honchos promised us that we'd get to keep our gigs no matter how the magazines stacked up, we took them at their word and put together an unbiased comparison. ♦

Cybersports Gamesport

	Cybersports	Gamesport
1. Amount of games reviewed		X
2. Interviews with actual sports stars	X	
3. Shameless use of Michael Jordan on Cover to sell more magazines	X	X
4. Cool-looking art and layout	X	
5. Burns longer and with more heat		X
6. First to review latest games	X	
7. Most excessive use of mustard yellow		X
8. Game comparison reviews	X	
9. Secrets and Hints	X	X
10. Easiest to roll up to smash bugs		X

not their license but the quality of the game and its publisher," says Roach.

"A lot of licensors have been disappointed with their royalties," Roach explains. "They've seen that it's in their best interests to do their due diligence and team up with a really strong publisher who has a good track record and commitment to doing great sports games."

"We're not looking to just do deals

because someone is going to write us a really big check," declares Dick Glover, senior vice president of ESPN, which lends its name to a lot of products. "We are only going to do deals that we think are prudent business, but more importantly, enhance and enlarge our core business."

"When we look around to determine whether we want to do a deal or not, it's a pretty simple test: If we do this deal, is it

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THE \$ELLING OF THE OLYMPICS\$



Some sports franchises, like John Madden and World Wrestling Federation, top the charts with something just about every year. They're dynasties. Properties like that are to gaming what signing Mel Gibson or Tom Hanks is for a new film. Hollywood calls those sure-fire celebrities bankable names. In interactive entertainment, the perennials deliver virtually guaranteed bankable profits.

By comparison, the Summer Olympics license is a roller coaster with dizzying highs and sickening lows. It's worthless—until about six months before the athletes get together for the big event. For that brief period, the Olympics becomes an obsession as Americans turn into instant experts about events they totally ignore for the rest of the four-year cycle.

The juiciest fruit is high up in the tree, and few publishers dare risk going way out on a limb with this short-lived license. "The Olympics is more complicated than most other sports licenses," says Robert Botch, president of U.S. Gold. "It involves dealing with individual governing bodies. You first have to secure the rights in the venue where it is taking place, and then you have to also nail the rights in the other countries through their Olympic committees. Each Olympic committee has different criteria, different interests."

Botch concedes that U.S. Gold's experience with previous Olympic-based products helped. "It was a little bit easier for us, because it is the third time we've done it," he notes. Still, it took over two and a half years to get everything in place for what will be the most comprehensive exploitation of the Olympics in the history of interactive electronic entertainment. "We were already in negotiations while we were still doing the Lillehammer game," says Botch.

Sometimes, capturing the prize exhausts the winner. By the time the license is ready, the window of opportunity is barely a crack. Publishers have to be content with getting one title out, and it may be a severely compromised one at that!

But U.S. Gold didn't want a simple, "one-off" opportunity. "We were looking for a way to introduce a lineup of sports games that would have a strong license attached to them," explains Botch, "but yet would not be in direct competition with the many sports games on the market right now."

The publisher hopes to build a franchise overnight. They're working on six games, all of which are scheduled to debut before the opening of the Atlanta Summer Olympic Games. "U.S. Gold wants a strong sports franchise, but we thought it was crowded in the baseball, football and even basketball categories."

Two, one each for console and computer, aren't even sports titles. U.S. Gold plans a side-scroller starring the Atlanta mascot Izzy, and a computer-adventure in which the goal is to collect medals while answering trivia questions.

The real meat is the four sports games. On tap are: a track and field anthology, a soccer sim, another grab bag of non-track and field events and a basketball title. ●

going to be a quality product that enhances our core business. And if the answer is 'yes,' we will try to conclude a deal."

Glover has manned the licensing trenches, first on behalf of Titan Sports and now with ESPN, since the 1980s. He has helped ESPN develop criteria for prospective licensors. The strategy is as direct and proactive as Glover himself. "If we do a license for an ESPN product, we are going to insist that we be involved, including a degree of con-

trol over the product. The product has our name on it, so it has to reflect our sensibilities."

ESPN doesn't just sell the license and rush to the bank. "We will review every element and before it is even designed, have the appropriate people at ESPN sit down with the appropriate people on the other side to help give them some insight into how we operate."

"We look for people whose philosophies are consistent with ours. If someone comes in and says, 'We want to buy your license, and we'll pay you whatever it takes,' we'll tell them to leave." The strength of the ESPN franchise has allowed it to satisfy these conditions—and score seven-figure agreements in the electronic world.

Old-line software companies are watching the entertainment conglomerates' licensing policies very closely. They fear that the

Hollywood giants will overestimate the value of licenses for interactive electronics and drive up royalty rates. Lurking just below that is an even more insidious worry: What if the giants decide to buy their way into the market by consciously overpaying for properties.

"We've seen in other industries that publishers have been willing to spend up to 30 percent of the wholesale price on a license," observes Dean Frost of Frost Capital Partners, San Francisco, Calif. "When we compared what our industry was doing, which is more in the 5-10 percent or 15 percent range, to other industries, we saw that in other industries people are really willing to pony up."

"I wouldn't be surprised if it is different in niche categories where only a few licenses are truly valuable. Once you've got Indy Car and NASCAR, like Papyrus, it's not quite clear what's left. You'd have to go to individual drivers or something like that."

Publishers aren't any smarter than the spendthrift major league club owners, but circumstances limit their ability to make fools of themselves. However much they yearn to bid licenses into the stratosphere, the sales and profit picture won't support it.

"From my history, not only in the software industry but also previously, keeping the royalty percentages somewhere in the 10 percent range is important," says Ben Dyer, chairman of Intellimedia Sports, Inc. His company is producing sports instruction CD-ROMs like *Tom Kite Golf* and *Basketball with Coach K*.

"Certainly it's very difficult for the financial models to work with 20 percent royalties. Ten percent is a workable number, 20 percent is not workable," Dyer says. "The flip side of it is that you want to make sure the numbers work for the celebrity also. You want to make certain that person has enough compensation to feel like it's worth doing."

"I think licensing is going to get a lot more expensive," predicts Bob Botch, president of U.S. Gold, which has licensed the Summer Olympics scheduled for Atlanta next summer. "The licensor is looking for a larger commitment in terms of development dollars and marketing dollars."

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Why License?

"Can a sports game be successful without a license? Within sports, I would say that would be difficult," says Dean Frost.

Bob Peterson sounds the same note. "It's almost immeasurable, it's so important. What I would point to is the John Madden license and what it's done for Electronic Arts."

"I think of licensing as a subset of brand," says Stan Roach, executive vice president of Accolade. "When you say *HardBall* or *Madden Football*, a great deal of meaning is conjured. We live in a sound bite world. One way we all use them, whether you're a candidate looking for a slogan or a game company looking for a brand, you look for ways to pack a lot of communication value into a short expression."



"From a commercial point of view, you want to own that expression, and have it be almost a barrier to entry or at least a basis for preference. In the ideal world, as a manufacturer, I want to create and own totally the franchise name, such as products like *HardBall* or *Origins* with *Ultima*, just the way Paramount owns *Star Trek*."

Building up a franchise with no pop-cultural pedigree can be a long, slow process. The bonanza of total ownership and control sits at the end of the rainbow, but getting there is considerably harder than it was for Dorothy to reach Oz.

"The Holy Grail in the

Who Argue\$ With \$ucce\$\$?

entertainment business is to own and nurture your own franchise," Roach says. "But there are times when it's just commercially smart to rent—we call it licensing—someone else's brand name and tag it with the thing you're making."

Ben Dyer elaborates further. "The content is very much entwined with the sports celebrity we have licensed. What is attractive about our products is what they have to say about the subject. And of course, how we've been able to package and deliver that in this medium. It's somewhat different than a game company doing a basketball game."

Stacking double and triple licenses is the hottest trend in sports gaming. It's expensive, but some consider it a necessity. Bob Peterson is strong on sports celebrity licenses. "A single player has been marketed and has persona in the public eye. When you get to a team, it's just a team or a whole league. It's better to look for a visible name. Look at baseball. Everybody's trying to do baseball."

Frank Thomas Big Hurt Baseball from Acclaim, Tony LaRussa Baseball.

Everybody has some kind of a name in the baseball area. But none of them really stand out that much."

"There are so many different licenses that it becomes a blur. We thought that *Sports Illustrated* brought several things to MicroLeague in particular," says John Brazier. SAI has just added the *Sports Illustrated* tag to its statistical baseball simulation *MicroLeague Baseball '95*. "MicroLeague has really not released a baseball product for approximately three years, and we felt that *Sports Illustrated* would partner with us in that they would offer advertising support as well as bring credibility to us."

WINNER\$ AND LOSER\$

The licensing field is so competitive that few licensors and licensees will rate the good and bad performers for the record. Neutral observers, thankfully, are freer with their opinions. Our reporters hit the telephone and cruised the Net to poll informed observers. Here's what we learned.

Number One Sports License: John Madden. He's a recognizable personality with a well-defined image who fits with the product that bears his name. And the product itself is excellent. Several analysts cited *John Madden Football* as the best combination of a high-quality product with a superb identifying brand.

Best Software Licensee: Electronic Arts. This partly reflects the respect for the *Madden* steamroller. *FIFA Soccer* also drew praise as a licensing coup. The runners up were Accolade, Access (for the *Links* course add-ons) and Crystal Dynamics.

Best Licensor: MLBPA. No one liked the strike, but the MLBPA has distinguished itself in the aftermath. Most of our respondents declined to nominate any licensor for sainthood.

Worst Sports License: Buster Douglas. A huge pay-out (said to be \$2 million) netted horrible results when Buster ballooned to over 300 lbs. and took the express train back to oblivion.

Worst Possible Sports Licenses: Darryl Strawberry. The unanimous choice as the license you'd least want on your next product. Said one software publisher: "How'd you like the last four years of Mike Tyson?"



If John Madden extended his annual "All-Madden Team" to include off-the-field contributors, Don Transth, vice president of sports marketing for Electronic Arts, would get one of those cool jerseys. With Activision and, for the last seven years, EA, Transth has spearheaded marketing and licensing. He's EA's point man in its extensive sports-related licensing activities.

The Transth philosophy: "A good license makes a great game able to achieve its maximum success. But a license does not mean a thing if the game isn't excellent."

Everybody does the talk. Even Transth is somewhat in awe of the franchise he has helped create. "There's something magical about that game that has captured sports fans year after year."

Madden has been all that and a bag of silicon chips for EA, since a chance meeting with founder and former president Trip Hawkins introduced the then-coach of the Oakland Raiders to electronic sports.

"The secret to Madden is that we have been working with him consistently for eight or nine years. I think the key to using a license like Madden is not just to put the

name on the front of the box with a picture, but actually use him.

"We spend a serious amount of time with him every year in the preseason, talking about changes in the sport, personnel changes, defensive tendencies—nuances we build into the new game that other people may not be aware of if they are relying on the in-house talent. Very few people know as much about football as John Madden. He gets briefed on every team every week.

"In his mind, he's still a coach. He's a coach who talks to people on television, but he's still a coach first and a TV analyst second. And because he is a coach, his game becomes a key outlet for his information."

Madden's contribution to the games is varied and voluminous. "Our meetings with Madden are probably some of the most enjoyable moments of the job.

"We get together and he's got a list of four or five pages of comments that are feedback from players about their ratings. He gets hit up constantly when he's on the road. I'm faster than that! I'm stronger than that!" Madden's two sons help work on

game play, refining each year's editions in light of the strengths and weaknesses of the previous one.

"What Madden enables us to do," Transth sums up, "is add a very distinctive personality and expertise to the game that goes beyond the player and league licenses."

Madden himself doesn't mind patting himself on the back for the success of the game, which he attributes in part to its constantly evolving nature.

"We totally change and adapt the game every year to make it better, add the new rule and player changes. We keep it fresh and new and people like that.

"Nothing gets in the game without my input," says Madden. "I do all the strategy that goes into the games. It was my idea to put 22 guys on the field. [EA Sports] only wanted to put eight to 10 guys on [but] I told them they had to put all 22. I take a lot of pride in the Madden games and my input adds to the uniqueness and the realism of the games...we continually have the best game on the market year after year."

Waiting Till Next Year

Uncertainty about acceptance for 32- and 64-bit consoles doesn't dim analysts' enthusiasm for interactive electronic sports. The category's user profile fits the slightly older demographics for both high-end consoles and PCs.

If anything is sure to sell, it's sports.

"As a core category, sports will continue to be important, with special appeal to males in the 15- to 35-year-old range," predicts Marty Brochstein of CMR. "Multiplayer capability has contributed to their popularity, and so has online capability."

"I don't think there'll be much difference from what it's been, which is to say football, hockey and basketball," suggests John Taylor, of Arcadia Investment Corp. and FUSION's

eye on Wall Street. "There's constant movement as opposed to setup and then action and reaction."

Constant action is what's expected behind the scenes as well as on the screens. Clamor for high-impact sports licenses is rising rapidly. And with licensors getting choosy about where they put their precious names, it looks like consumers will be getting a lot more "A" sports titles, which require as much as \$2 million to properly develop. ●

The Top 10 Sports Games We'd Like To See

10) Virtual Log-Rolling

Feel all the tension and turmoil log-rollers feel as they struggle to stay vertical on a knotted circular surface. Suspenders optional.

9) English Football Crush

As a football-loving British spectator (soccer to all you non-European types), the player must avoid gangs of roving skinheads and swells of onrushing crowds in an attempt to make it home safely from the game.

8) Mafia Day At The Races

Use your considerable influence to make sure your jockey crosses the line first. And remember, *always bet on number six*.

7) Mike Tyson's Lock-Up

A boxing game where winning and losing

take on entirely different outcomes than in a pay-per-view special.

6) Virtual Ghost In The Graveyard

Run around a virtual front yard, just like a bunch of stupid kids.

5) H-E-Double-Hockey-Sticks

In this ultimate fighting game, men with blades on their feet and sticks in their hands battle it out for vague, although testosterone-ridden, reasons (just like most fighting games). In a hidden feature after 50 rounds, players play a game of hockey.

4) Mascot Mayhem

As the Cleveland Indian Chicken, you must rally fans into a frothing frenzy, while attempting not to overheat in the cheap, poorly ventilated suit. Light the opposing team's mascot on fire for extra points.

3) Aztec Sports 1395

Sate mighty Quetzalcoatl by dropping the sacrificial head into the opposing team's hoop. Fail, and end up through the hoop yourself.

2) EA Let's Strike Baseball

As a pay-savvy player, weigh your personal options against playing or not playing in a given season. Lose points for taking the shine off the Great American Pastime.

1) NRA Deerhunting With Ted Nugent

After years and years of suffering from cat-scratch fever, Ted Nugent has decided to take out his troubles on "the little creatures." With the NRA's favorite member as your guide, players (from one to unruly mob size) trek through the woods, taking out squirrels, raccoons and muskrats with an arsenal of semi-automatic weapons at your disposal. ●



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with the all new demented episode four, "Thy flesh Consumed."

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THE MECK SHALL

INHERIT

HELL



MY NAME

A LONG TIME AGO IN A GALAXY

The apprehension of speaking with George Lucas may seem to some as unnerving as falling into the gaping and slowly digesting Sarlacc Pit. (Pardon the association of Mr. Lucas with a cruelly toothed sand creature; that is to say the experience of making his acquaintance is nothing less than daunting.) Over the years, the writer/director/producer has become some sort of an exalted sci-fi virtuoso, partly due to the scarcity of his interviews with the press, though more so through the near-fanaticism with which his fans regard his work.

Lucas himself appears a bit of a near-fanatic at times—for his work, of course. He speaks about his companies (Lucas Digital Ltd., Lucasfilm Ltd. and LucasArts Entertainment Company) with ceaseless vigor, and enthalls with a voice, not quite the basso-profundo of James Earl Jones, but equally as captivating. While he showed signs of fatigue from Star Wars trilogy questions, probably more irksome for Lucas than a half-hour Blublocker Sunglasses infomercial, he did speak on the rather undeveloped projects (all of which will be filmed concomitantly).

Wasting no more time, here is the latest from the very, very busy film auteur, interviewed by FUSION contributing editor Roy Bassave.



IS LUCAS

FAR, FAR AWAY REVISITED

Why bring THX to video now?

With my experience of watching films with audiences, I realize the quality of presentation has a lot to do with the enjoyment the audience has and how much they love the movie. When *Star Wars* came out originally, it started the pioneer, and the technology was still at its early stages—so I've always wanted to bring out a high-quality videotape of the film and we've worked very hard in the area of laserdisc.

My company (THX) pioneered the idea of doing high-quality transfers into laserdisc, which is a high-quality media. Now we've been able to move that into VHS tapes, and we're sort of launching the program with *Star Wars*. From my point of view, we'll finally get a clearer picture and dynamic sound of the film on video.

How does this release compare to the laserdisc box set?

Well, hopefully we're trying to get VHS as close to laserdisc quality. The laserdisc box set was a milestone in viewing technology. I don't think anybody has been able to come out with a version of the film that's of that quality, that's not in the theater. We're hoping to get that same quality into the videotape. Obviously, the media is not as sophisticated, but I think it's gone a long way in improving the image and sound quality.

*Are the three *Star Wars* being released in letterbox?*

Yes, they're available in two versions: letterbox and full screen.

What does THX actually do for the video?

In the THX disc and videotape it's a much clearer picture and the audio quality is much more like it was presented in the theater.

FEED THE

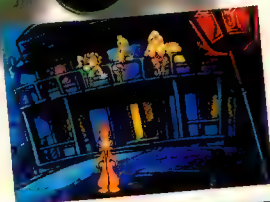
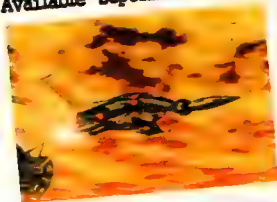
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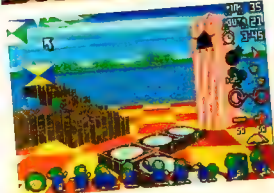
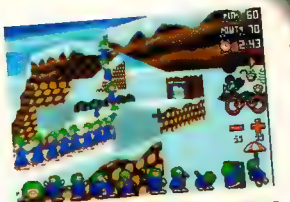
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Do you think the Star Wars trilogy is still popular after 18 years?

Well, from my point of view it seems to be. From everyone I've talked to, that's all they ask about and all they want to know is when the new ones are coming out [so] it seems it's still extremely popular.

Do you think that the rerelease of these films will turn on the younger generation who were born after the last Star Wars films?

Well, I'm hoping that we'll be able to reach a wide audience with a very high-quality videotape. I'm working also to take the original movies (especially the original *Star Wars*) and add scenes that I wasn't able to add because of time and money; and also fix some of the special effects and remaster the sound track and the digital so that it can be presented theatrically in 1997 as I intended it to be.

I've never been really satisfied with the film [and] this finally gives me the chance to have the movie be more the way I wanted it to be originally. What we're trying to do with the videotapes is to get the final version [the highest quality in the market; and then out of the market before I release the theatrical special addition of those films.

How much hands-on input did you have with this project?

Well, primarily I've given the remastering technicians the check print, which is the standard they have to meet in terms of what it should look like and sound like. That's something that I've evolved since I developed this THX group, which is dedicated to matching original quality. So in terms of the actual hands-on, it's really more that I've spent a lot of years building up this group and getting them to be the sharpest, most professional group targeted toward quality presentation...and then showing them what it should look like.

What other films can we expect to look forward to that will have THX encoded in them?

Obviously there are a great number of films coming out on laserdisc, but this will be the first time THX comes to video. We'll have to wait to see what happens to the

reissue of the films. We're obviously hoping to widen the highest quality program into its many quality projects as we can.

How does your THX compare to Sony Digital in the theaters?

Well, again the Sony Digital is a playback system. It's a way of getting the sound off the original film. THX is really a playback system with more speakers and a technology that balances the speakers. It's like saying I got a new digitally mastered CD, but you got a great new player (which is what the Sony system is)—but you still have to have good speakers and a good acoustical environment in order for it to be able to sound good. We sort of provide the other end of it, so the two systems are actually very compatible. The Sony system actually sounds better on THX.

Since a lot of people don't have a surround sound system, do you think this'll be a good time to invest in them to better enjoy the films?

I think a lot has happened in home entertainment centers and people are really interested in home video. They should go to their local audio visual store and check out all the new things that are available in the marketplace—and don't forget to look at the THX encoders also.

How far along are you in the re-editing of the Star Wars special theatrical edition?

We've been working on the special edition for about a year now. There's a scene between Han Solo and Jabba the Hutt right after the Cantina scene, there's more shots in Mos Eisley Spaceport and a few [more] of the battle shots at the end of the film. Obviously we're going to play it back in the theater with a digital soundtrack, which we've never been able to do before.

I'm writing the new prequel trilogy right now and I'm going to continue. Hopefully I'll have the three scripts finished by spring and we're hoping to start shooting in '97 so they can come out sometime in '98 or '99.

Do you plan to direct any of the three films?

Obviously I'd like to direct one of them. I'd like to direct the first one. That really depends on where I am at that point and how much energy I have.

Directing is a very myopic enterprise where you don't really get to see what's going on other than what you're doing on that day on the set. If I can get things organized to a point where the bigger picture can also be taken care of, then I'll be able to direct.

Do you have any subtitles for the films yet?

Not yet, they're still called 1-2-3. [Laughing]

Is there another Indiana Jones film in the future?

Yes, I'm still working on a script for that.

Have you considered any present day stars that can portray the young characters in the next trilogy?

No, because obviously we're going to be using unknowns. It's just a matter of finding them.

If you could say something personally to the Star Wars fans (and non-Star Wars fans) on why they should buy this Star Wars set, what would it be?

I think you will enjoy the films much more if you can actually see them clearly and hear them with all their dynamic range. This is going to be the one chance to get it in its most high-quality version.

For a limited time, look at the Star Wars Special Edition's special one-of-a-kind video box set.

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punches. She knows that with the

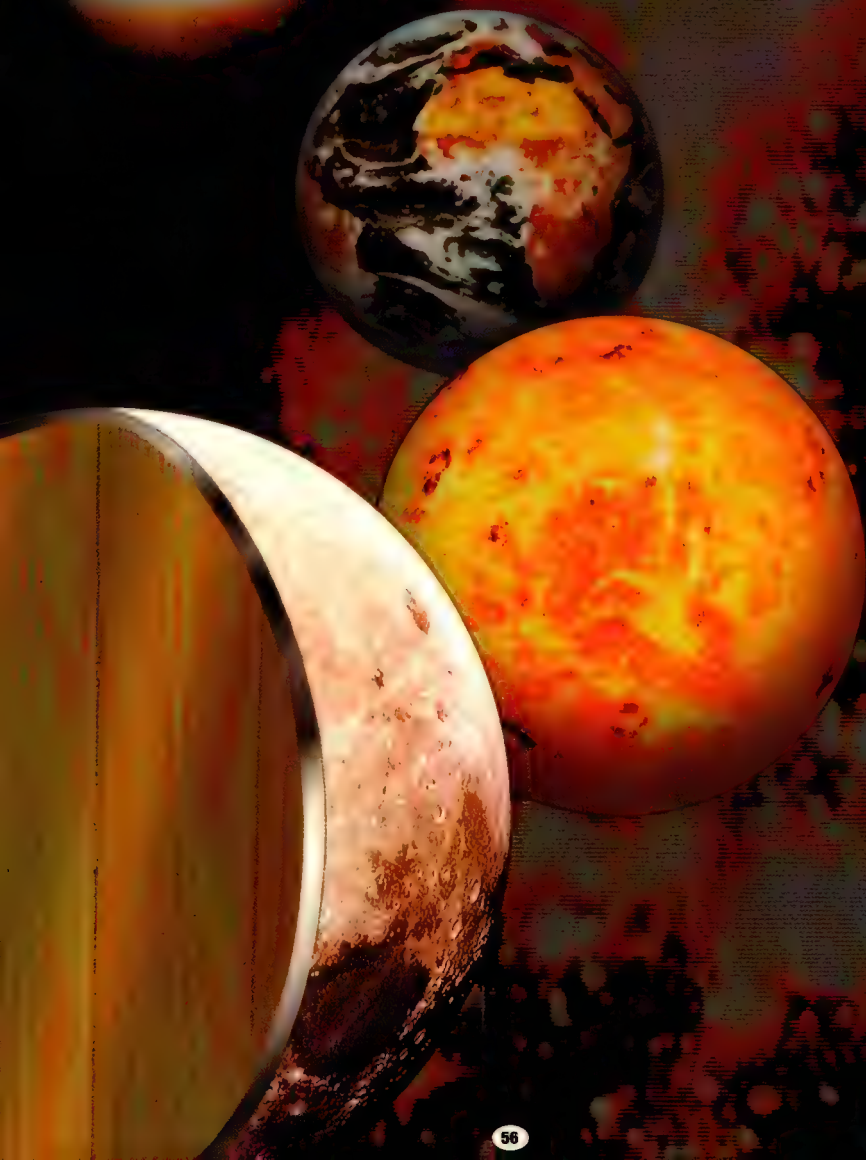
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The end of the internet as we know it....



W E W O rld

by John Wesley Hardin



Imagine crawling a dark, labyrinthine, Library of Congress in a first-person Doom-like interface. When the librarian pops up, instead of blowing him/her away, you ask a question and get an answer in real time.

Imagine walking into a William Gibson cyberspace filled with monolithic corporate databases and murderous street ninjas for a role-playing game with your friends.

Imagine playing *SimCity*, walking through the streets of the town you have created and speaking to the citizens face to face. To paraphrase AT&T, "You Will."

We have seen the future of the Internet, and its name is VRML. Within one year, it will be as easy to create a 3-D environment on the web as it is to create an HTML document today. Within two years, there will be as many 3-D worlds on the World Wide Web as there are home pages today. Real-time, true-space interaction with the vatars of other computer

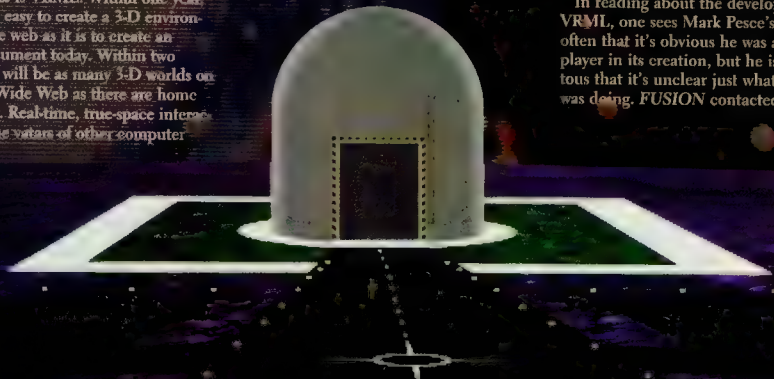
users will be as common as online chat. The availability of low-cost, easy-to-implement VR promises to change every aspect of the online world, a revolution from gaming to cybersex to online banking.

Virtual Reality Modeling Language, or VRML (pronounced 'vermal'), is a language for creating multiuser interactive simulations—virtual worlds networked on the World Wide Web. VRML is not based on Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML), the language behind the millions of text documents on the web. Hyper Text Markup Language has revolutionized the Internet in just two years, and web traffic has surpassed FTP pack-

ets to make up the bulk of info on the Internet. HTML, for all its advantages, wasn't made to support intricate graphics. Just as the icons and hyperlinks of HTML added a second dimension to the old command line Net interface, VRML adds a third dimension to the two-dimensional HTML document.

Driven by the consensus of a need for a common language to specify 3-D on the Internet and inspired by the virtual worlds of William Gibson and Neil Stephenson, Mark Pesce of the Community Company, Gavin Bell of SGI and Tony Parisi of Intervista conceived VRML 1.0.

In reading about the development of VRML, one sees Mark Pesce's name so often that it's obvious he was a principal player in its creation, but he is so ubiquitous that it's unclear just what exactly he was doing. FUSION contacted Mark



Pesce, holed up outside of Boston writing a book on VRML, and asked a few questions. "Kicked out of MIT fair and square 13 years ago," Pesce is a consultant and moderator of the VRML newsgroup and a man with a vision. Says Pesce, "My role in the creation of VRML was very much the nut crying in the wilderness a year and a half ago saying, 'Look guys, there's this really cool thing called the World Wide Web'—and they said, 'Huh?' And we need a 3-D interface for it" and they said, "What for?" Now it's much easier because people are familiar with the Internet, with the web and with virtual reality. So, my role has been very much to evangelize, to facilitate and to invent."

The World Wide Web is the best, most accessible Internet interface yet created. It's relatively simple to write the HTML content: Any idiot can do it, as evidenced by a visit to any thousand web sites. Backgrounders on VRML are chock-full of references to 3-D modeling programs and meta-data file formats: It's easy to wonder how much ability the average cybercitizen will need to make a VRML web site. Is this a step toward taking the World Wide Web out of the hands of the non-commercial, non-governmental user? Pesce responds passionately: "This comes back to my role as an evangelist! Very much from my own point of view, this is...I don't know if you want to call it a crusade, but it is a goal of mine to make it possible for anyone to be expressive in this environment. Cyberspace is for everyone, period. It's not just for the rich, it's not just for the well-connected, it's just not for the big companies, it's not for just the creative folks."

"We want to make sure there are programs that are extremely easy for people to use, so that an 8-year-old, a 20-year-old or an 80-year-old could create a VRML space. There are a number of products in production right now that will be doing that. For one example, PARAGraph's Virtual Home Space Builder is amazing. It's totally Windows based, totally drag-and-drop world design. On the whole, VRML is considerably easier to use than HTML, because you don't have to remember text. There's no point at which the user will need to see the actual VRML."



Since an interactive 3-D WWWeb is a natural arena for gaming, it won't be too long before the next-generation gaming platforms come with doorways to the online world, especially if it's up to mark Pesce. "I won't be satisfied until there's a VRML

browser running on a PlayStation. VRML will work very well with a PlayStation or a Sega Saturn. They're graphically intense and there's a lot of interactivity going on there. The one thing they would need

satisfied until there's a VRML browser running on a PlayStation." —Mark Pesce

is a VRML browser. I don't know that either of these machines are well adapted for that yet, but the idea is to lower the barrier to entry as much as possible. Every time we made it easier to use the Internet, we've increased the usage of the Internet. It's directly corollary that it's not that obvious to people. You could be surprised how many people come up with that idea for the first time when they look at the World Wide Web and go, "That's what the web is so popular."

"What we need to do is take that to the next level, where we're not talking about text anymore, because text is still, in a lot of ways, an interface. You just don't think about it because it's an interface that's 5,000 years old. To take the next step beyond that is to go with what we call an NFI (No Fucking Interface) where things are the things themselves. You don't have to train anyone to use it because the metaphor is the real world."

Obviously, the way we think about the online world is going to change. The implications, taken to their logical ends, are staggering. Whereas all HTML web sites are essentially the same (a text document with pictures), a VRML site can take the appearance of anything that the designer can envision and execute. Explore the Louvre, or ancient Pompeii, role-play in a haunted castle or whatever the designer wants you to see. Anything is possible.

Real-time interaction, combined with VRML, could make a major shift in how we interface the Internet. Real-time interaction in real-time 3-D worlds is the Holy Grail of MOOs and MUDs. The imagination is a powerful tool; hundreds of text-driven online communities thrive

on the visualization powers of users. But with VRML, the MUCKers can finally see the medieval castle, the space station or wherever the games and the social interaction take place.

While most interactive VRML sites are basically chat channels enhanced with visual representations of users, as the technology becomes more sophisticated, fine movements and physical behaviors will become possible to model. Among other things, cybersex is going to take on an heretofore only imagined aspect ("Run for your lives, it's the FurryMuckers!"). Whatever form it takes, Netizens may at last be able to interact with the web,



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HERE...



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and each other, in a way that was only imagined before.

That, at least, is the promise of VRML. Although true interactivity was left out of VRML 1.0 to streamline design and implementation issues, VRML's designers fully expect to have real-time, full 3-D interaction on the web with the advent of VRML 2.0 next year, and IBM and Worldline's VRML+ offers limited interactivity today. "I think they'll get (real-time interactivity) in stages. The first serious piece of VRML was a hybrid of ParcMOO and VRML called WaxWeb. That site is not built out of HTML. It's built in MOO and VRML. It is, as far as I know, the most advanced piece of VRML work yet done. When I was showing VRML off at SIGGRAPH [an annual graphics expo] last year, David Blair and Tom Meyer (WaxWeb's creators) went bananas. They were the first people, besides me and Tony, who went absolutely bananas, about VRML. So they have been working on VRML as a delivery vehicle longer than anyone else."

So, how long until you can jack in, turn on and drop out? While there's a lot of VRML you can see right now, it's going to be a pretty lonely virtual experience, in most places, for a while to come. Pesce explains. "When it comes to real-time interactivity, you're confronting a special class of problems. Let's say you're on a Sony PlayStation, and I'm on a PC running Windows NT. We're interacting in a virtual environment; you see me, I see you, and I have a piece of paper and I'm writing on it with my virtual pen, and you can see what I'm writing. Then I hand that pen to you. How do you know how that pen works?"

"This is a problem in what we call object

discovery, object brokerage and object interrogation. This is where the problem lies in real-time interaction. Fortunately, there's something called Java. Java is a language that is platform independent and network aware. If I hand this pen

"Cyberspace is for everyone, because it's not just for the rich, it's not just for the well connected, it's not just for the big companies, it's not just for the creative folks."

to you, you're able to understand, in the context of your environment, how that pen behaves. What we're probably going to see happen over the next 12 months is a cross fertilization of VRML 1.0, which just describes how things look, and Java, which just describes how things behave, to get an interactive language that describes how things look and behave. We've been talking with the people at Sun Microsystems for a long time, already, about making this happen. Now that Netscape has gone and introduced Java, it's become even more of a fait accompli."

Anyone who has ever read the classic William Gibson novel *Countdown*, from Lisa



Overdrive, et. al.) is familiar with cyberspace, a surreal shared world of vast and impenetrable databases, where biz is done at the speed of light and everything is represented by a 3-D model. According to Mark Pesce, the future is already here: "I think that all VRML space is Gibsonian cyberspace. That was certainly my goal in design. We know if you want to go with the canonical definition of Gibson's matrix, which is corporate databases visualized in a shared space, then that process is already well under way. Clay Graham at SGI has already taken an SQL database and plugged that into VRML. As VRML grows, we're going to see it evolve into a direction that looks pretty much like the Gibsonian matrix."

"When we're talking about real-time 3-D, that's done. The underlying technology is available. Around this time next year the technology will have evolved enough so that not only will people be able to do things like WaxWeb, but they'll have multiple participants actually doing interesting things in real time. It really is

Gibson, it's Stephenson, it's whatever you want to call it. It's Cyberspace."

"People ask me, 'Will VRML work inside an Internet browser like Netscape?' and I ask them, 'Do you put the world inside the book, or the book inside of the

world?' People think the universe is HTML. It's not. HTML is a form of content, just like movies and sound. A lot of people who are looking at the web right now are looking at the web as populated by, even if we add AOL's membership, about 5 million people. That's it. Come back and talk to me when it's 100 million. Most people are going to see the Internet for the first time through a VRML interface, not an HTML interface. I'm positive of that. It's just going to be the dominant primary interface."

People wonder what the interface to VRML browser would be. I point to the desktop on most computers. Windows lets us put wallpaper up on our windows, which is not something we actually do to windows. What if we took the wallpaper out and rendered the cubic foot of space that's inside your monitor, and made that a 3-D environment? Maybe it's your office, maybe it's your den, maybe it's the deck of the Enterprise. What do you want it to be? And your windows, where you're doing your e-mail or word processing, are in front of it, but when you put them all aside, you're in a 3-D environment. When you're in that environment and someone can come up to the back of your monitor and knock on the glass, and go, 'Hey, can we do a meeting?' then we'll have cyberspace." ■



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VRML: Do it Yourself

Now you're ready to explore this brave new world. First thing you do is get the keys that will open the three-dimensional doors of perception: Get a VRML browser. Most sites concerned with VRML in any aspect will have links to browser download sites, but here are direct links to two.

Intervista Software makes the Worldview VRML browser for Windows 3.1, Windows 95, Mac 68000 and PowerMacs. It's fully VRML compliant (meaning it supports all features of VRML 1.0, like Level-of-Detail, Texture and Directional Lighting). Download the beta at <http://www.webmaster.com/vrml>.

Silicon Graphics made the first VRML browser, WebSpace, but it has been available only for Silicon Graphics machines and other high-end platforms like SunSparc workstations. The release of Windows and Macintosh platforms have been delayed, but should be out any time. All available versions can be found at <http://www.sgi.com/products/webFORCE/WebSpace/>.

There is a lot of momentum behind all things VRML right now, and any WWW search will probably yield another half dozen VRML browsers that weren't available yesterday.

Head Out On the Highway

Now you've got a big, sexy VRML browser humming under your hood. Where can you go to check out the cool sites and hot virtual babes? Virtual babes are kind of in short supply, but cool sites are fortunately numerous. Like VRML browsers, there are more of them every day. There are a few

gimmicky sites that only show an inkling of what VRML is capable of, but that is quickly changing. All of these sites are accessed by HTML browsers, with hotlinks to VRML spaces.

Worlds Chat (<http://www.worlds.net>) is an online, interactive virtual laboratory. No, users don't conduct experiments, they are the experiment. Worlds Chat was created just to prove it could be done, and now Worlds Inc. (the creators of Worlds Chat) are learning a lot by watching how people interact in 3-D. According to Worlds Chat, "This is there as a demo of our technology and really allows us to study it. It's like an ongoing laboratory." Worlds Chat and IBM have developed a VRML protocol, called VRML+, that adds interactivity to VRML and cracks open the door behind which lies the future of the Internet. After downloading the Worlds Chat front end (requires a minimum 486 with 6 MB RAM and 256 colors and a 9600 baud modem), users go to the Worlds Chat space station and choose an avatar to represent themselves. Available avatars (or Digital Actors as Worlds like to call them) are Punkers, Chess pieces, Fish, floating Chinese masks, Alice in Wonderland or the disembodied head of Nicole Brown Simpson, among others.

Aside from interacting with other avatars (via keyboard only, though voice communication is in the planning stages), there's not a lot to do in Worlds Chat. One can go out on the roof of the space station and admire the stars and the earth, or go in and ride the escalators in one of six areas devoted to Food, Geometry, Ideas, Technology, Textures and Words. There's not very much difference among them at this point, though that can be expected to change as Worlds Chatters begin experimenting with the possibilities of each area.

Worlds Inc. isn't just watching people interact online. They are moving and shaking the 3-D Web with several other works in progress. Steven Spielberg's Starbright Foundation and Worlds Inc. are creating a non-profit virtual world that links hospitalized children from around the country and eventually, from around the world. Though not publicly accessible, Starbright World allows children to interact in a 3-D world where they can play and roam, despite any physical limitations.

On a less altruistic front, Worlds



and Visa are collaborating to bring a "virtual bank branch" to the WWW. While many banks have home pages on the Net, they are all in HTML. Visa's 3-D site will allow users access to online banking services in a realistically modeled building peopled by real bank tellers, connected by modem to the site.

Lastly, Worlds Inc. and IBM are offering from the stringently academic to the purely playful. Two less serious exhibits are a real-time VRML clock that will tell the local time when the user clicks on a world map and a collection of 9600 faces arranged in the shape of a spiral galaxy.

Serch is a service of **Scott Virtual Theme Parks** (<http://www.clark.net/pub/theme>), groundbreakers on the 3-D information highway who will build a roadside stand for you, for a price. "Reality with Personality, Unreal Estate and Content with Attitude" is what they offer to business clients, but the SVTP site promises they are "developing innovative, wild amusements for the world of 3-D on the Internet." Today, join the Inter-Galactic Network, and play with the Virtual World Factory where you can build your own 3-D world by pointing and clicking, no programming necessary, or go to Monkita Macro Polo, a pre-alpha version of the first-ever multiuser VRML world. Right now, it'll seem a little barren, as there's only one user at a time.

Virtual Vegas (<http://www.virtual.vegas.com>) offers a variety of online experiences, whether or not you have VRML, but it's more fun to cruise that way. With small amounts of cheesecake and large amounts of hype, VVegas expertly targets the largely male demographic of the Internet. There's gambling (just for fun now, but soon you will be able to destroy your credit online easier and faster than giving your credit card number to strangers on AOL), and the Ms. Metaverse contest, where you can view the photos, read the personal information (for some reason, there are a lot of bisexual chicks in this contest) and judge the beauty contest yourself. Sexist, but not closed-minded, the contestants range from drag queens to animated babes (Cherry Poptart, queen of X-Rated comic books). Future projects at VVegas include a promotion



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—PC Magazine

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Dracula



with the Luxor Hotel in Las Vegas for promotions and game applications, and a deal with Caesars Palace Forum Shops, an ultra-luxury fantasy mall, to make a virtual mall.

Virtual Vegas promises to provide CD-ROM games and online service within a



3-D environment that will "offer games, adventures, movies and music, as well as casino gaming. Virtual Vegas intends to be a major presence in the development of home-based casino gaming applications."

E~Scape (<http://www.t0.or.at/e~scape>) is a "3-D environment in the make" where users will "walk through hyperreal cities, visit bars, libraries, cinemas, spaceports, laboratories and hollow planets." Three commercial areas—Zero News, Planet Zero and Synreal City—will be available from this European server. A product of the Institute for New Cultural Technologies in Vienna, Austria, E~Scape is an odd mix of the commercial and intellectual (in North America, that's an oxymoron). Next to the skills for online thrills, there are quotes like this one: "Digital telecommunication toward hypermedia and the global connectivity of the infosphere provokes an interdis-

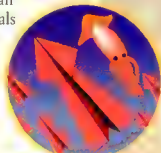
ciplinary intermediation of art and science on the basis of a society that is determined through new technologies." Sure dude, whatever you say. Can you tell us where the horny Net chicks are?

Other Interesting VRML Sites:

Virtual SOMA (<http://hyperion.com/planet9/vrsoma.htm>) is a VR replica of a real neighborhood in San Francisco (SOMA=South of Market Street) where most VRML software and development in the U.S. is made. **The Interactive Media Festival** (<http://www.spark.com/>) is a yearly competition that puts together a wide spectrum of disciplines involved in the creative applications of the WWW and related technologies. Most intriguing here is Tierra, a "biodiversity reserve" for artificial life, that can be explored as a 3-D environment in VRML. **Lightscape Technologies Virtual Walkthrough Library** (<http://www.lightscape.com>) has examples of VRML architecture, including Jerusalem City Hall and an operating room. **Interactive Origami** (<http://www.neuro.sfc.keio.ac.jp/~aly/polygon/vrml/ika>) uses VRML models to teach users to fold origami or maybe it's just for amusement.

You decide. **Objects At NASA** (<http://coney.gsfc.nasa.gov/mathews/objects/off2vrml.html>) is a library of 3-D modeled objects. As befits NASA, the objects include a WWI biplane, a space shuttle, Buck Rogers Fighter, U.S.S. Enterprise, a Klingon Battle Cruiser, Romulan Bird of Prey, X-Wing fighter, the Millennium Falcon, a TIE Fighter and a Super Star Destroyer. **NCSA VRML Homepage** (<http://www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/general/vrml/vrml-home.html>).

NCSA, home of Mosaic, has examples of several different academic applications, notably cosmology and mathematics. The cosmology and relativity group has stunning VRML models of black holes, dual black holes and exploding galaxies. **VRML Fractals** (<http://kirk.usafa.af.mil:80/~baird/vrml>) is the first VRML site devoted to the study of 3-D models of fractal geometry. This is important, because fractals will probably take a big part in creating realistic natural environments in cyberspace. These fractals of trees, mountains and other natural features are fully modeled; the closer one gets to them, the more detail appears. Since fractals take up a lot of disk space, these are available in different levels of detail (file sizes) from small to large. ●



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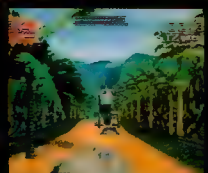
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SURF 'D

10 All-Star Internet Sports Sites in a League of their Own.

If you traded in your barstools and remote for an office chair and a mouse, welcome to the 21st century's version of the couch potato Olympics. To keep you from getting bogged down in the bush leagues, *FUSION* offers a list of the top 10 blue-chip sites for surfers to sink their teeth into.

There's a whole bunch of Internet off-ramps leading you to updates on every ballgame from here to Australia, but this list of the top sports sites will give you enough time to catch up on all the scores you need, call your bookie, knock down a couple rats and be back in time for pregame.

..... <http://yallara.cs.rmit.edu.au/~s9333>

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SPECIAL ONLINE EVENTS

<http://samur.cornell.edu/boxing.html>

IS SPORTS FAN!

by Mike Stokes

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

<http://www.sportillustrated.com/si/welcome.html>

1 The undisputed heavyweight champion of swimsuit and sports mags is looking for sparring partners in cyberspace. A great site based on its news and notes alone, it pushes past the competition with departments like "The Apocalypse is Upon Us," which points out the most bizarre stories of sports, such as a recent survey that listed the likes of O.J. Simpson and Tonya Harding among the top 20 most admired athletes, and a pen that mixes ink with an athlete's DNA to fight forgery. If the same stories appeared in the *Weekly World News*, nobody'd believe it.

ESPN SPORTSZONE

<http://espn.sportszone.com>

2 There may be no better way on this planet to keep up with the day's top sports stories than on ESPN. With the latest information for any team in any major sport as well as links to sites for teams, players and fantasy leagues, ESPN has something for everybody. Newspaper and magazine features from around the country give far-away fans a taste of home-team reporting,

and the site has recently added a weekly column by sports humorist Frank Deford. The most devoted ESPNheads (or those without a radio) can also download the catchy themes from the network's most popular shows.

1996 OLYMPICS

<http://www.atlanta.olympic.org/>

3 Let the hype begin! The Olympic site for the Summer Games in Atlanta has it all. Ticket information, places to stay, schedules of the events and even a place to buy commemorative bricks.

If you've got the time and hardware to download the audio and video portions of the site, the site is a multimedia dream. Brace yourself for a virtual fly-through of the stadiums or a greeting by Olympic Committee CEO and president Billy Payne. The site also features what is certain to be coming soon to a T-shirt near you: the Summer Games' mascot, Izzy, an example of what happens when Smurfs are crossbred with the California Raisins. If you're among the 2 million visitors, 15,000 journalists or 12,000 athletes expected to crowd into Atlanta next summer, this site will prepare you for the event of a lifetime.

WAKEBOARDING ONLINE

<http://www.gulfwave.com/wakeboard/wakebhome.htm>

4 An extreme web site for an extreme sport, Wakeboarding Online provides tips for beginners, the latest advances for experts and even explains what in the hell the sport is to those who haven't heard of it just yet. Compiled by the editors of *Wakeboarding* magazine, the site features editorials and interviews with the sport's most outrageous stars, accompanied by killer photography straight from the waves, and there's none of those annoying Mountain Dew guys in sight.

GOLF DIGEST GOLFWEB

<http://www.golfweb.com/>

5 If you're looking for a new place to hit the links, Golfweb's comprehensive listing of courses makes it one of the most functional sports sites on the Net. For students of the

game, the site also offers the latest golf news and a library featuring old articles from *GD*. The professional circuit is tracked as well, with statistics and scores from the major tournaments, including leading money winners and the toughest holes. Where else can you go to find a guy who finishes in 150th place and still takes home more than \$100,000 for his effort?



NHL OPEN NET

<http://www.nhl.com/>



Leading the pack of major team sports with cyber-sites is the NHL's

Open Net. As the game of cold steel on ice makes its move for a share of the television market, the league went all out to pick up potential fans skating around in cyberspace.

Along with the usual stats and scores that make up most of the major sports sites, the NHL provides fans with a complete interactive experience with a daily trivia game and a chat board for hockey fans. Along with team and player information is up-to-date NHL news, schedules and a marketplace with the latest NHL merchandise. The only thing missing is a big, toothless guy to come skating up behind you and check you headfirst into the monitor.



TENNIS SERVER

<http://www.tennisserver.com/Tennis.html>



At first glance, the Tennis Server doesn't look like much. It begins with a crude tennis graphic that, when selected, is blown up to show a larger version of the same crude graphic. Scrolling down, however, reveals a top-notch site. The Tennis Server features the latest and greatest stories direct from the sports ticker to keep fans constantly updated. It also provides links to other official and unofficial tennis sites. It also features "Net Game," a commentary by David Higdon, senior writer for Tennis Magazine. The only bad part is the sappy "Thank You" section that makes even the most stuffy fans yearn for a McEnroe outburst to put an end to it.

THE RACER ARCHIVE

<http://www.eng.hawaii.edu/Contribs/carima/ra.home.page.html>



One of the greatest spectator sports in the world comes home via the Internet on this site, which is broken down into Indy, Nascar and Formula 1. The site features a comprehensive history and statistics section with winners, margins of victory and youngest racers as well as the standings and race results. There is also a lame humor section with Letterman-esque top 10 lists, but keep in mind that the site is maintained by an engineering student—not a comedian.

THE ULTIMATE SPORTS HOME PAGE

<http://www.odyssey.com.au/sports/welcome.html>



One hundred percent unofficial and proud of it, a couple of boys from the land down under have thrown the Internet on the barby and cooked themselves up a site devoted to their favorite sports. With photos, stats and

game results for Australian rules football, basketball, rugby and soccer as well as links to other cool sites, this is the premier site for fans by fans. Rumor has it that kangaroo boxing will also be added next year.

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL @ BAT

<http://www.majorleaguebaseball.com/mlb/>



By not getting bogged down in old statistics and settling for the latest box scores, MLB's @ BAT is an all-star web site. Showcasing the players of the week and other standout performances in a photo gallery, the site always offers a reason to come back. Feature stories and contests are available to fans, while the ever-shrinking Cal's Corner tops it off with a countdown to Cal Ripken topping Lou Gehrig's record for consecutive games. ●



<http://www.intercom.net/use/piazza/nascar/nascar.html>

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CULTURE SHOCK

KISS ME DEADLY

Here are the people our parents warned us about



Kiss of Death marks the first big-screen top billing for David Caruso of NYPD Blue fame. This time Caruso

finds himself on the wrong side of the law as ex-con Jimmy Kilmarlin. Jimmy quit the wild ways of his youth to raise his daughter in a respectable environment. He's traded in his street shoes and party hat for "Honey, I'm home" and AA meetings with his wife Bev (*Mad About You*'s Helen Hunt).

Showing up frenzied and late at night, Jimmy's cousin Robbie (Michael Rappaport) persuades him to do one last job. Robbie is stuck for a driver for one of his boss' loads of stolen cars, and has made it clear that Robbie's continued health depends on the success of this shipment. When the police show up, the volatile situation explodes. Robbie and the rest make their escape leaving Jimmy to take the fall.

Jimmy pays for his crime while protecting the identities of his fellow crooks. His one hope is to get out of prison and give his family the simple life they were living until his lapse in judgment. Robbie meanwhile tries to keep the home fires burning by getting Bev drunk and putting the moves on her, which through an interest-



ing swerve of events sends her head-on into a truck.

Back on the inside, the news of Bev's death sends a grieving Jimmy to State prosecutor Frank Zioli's (Stanley Tucci) office. Jimmy exacts his revenge on Robbie with tidbits of information that lead Robbie's superiors to believe their henchman is the stoogie. Zioli is grateful, but greedy. He coerces Jimmy into becoming his inside man, forcing him back into the life of crime he wants to leave behind.



Kiss of Death

■ Fox Video

12345



Kiss of Death is a simple cops 'n' robbers drama showing both camp's dirty underbelly. Caruso's proficient when it comes to portraying a man struggling desperately to turn over a new leaf. The film's title is an enigma, as is Nicolas Cage in the role of a bad-ass. Little Junior's ruthlessness is defused through

silly statements that make the character almost impossible to take seriously. The film may not win any awards, but it's a vicarious view of the grim and deadly nightlife you can have if you hang out with the kind of people your parents warned you about.

—John Berr



PHAIR
2
MIDLAND

These are not the droids you're looking for.

BE THE MAN

Nothing can stop your goal of complete and total world domination

By this time, *Syndicate* is a veteran among games. With wit, dark humor and lots of gratuitous violence, *Syndicate* garnered a cult following as soon as it debuted on the PC about three years ago, then became a pretty good 16-Bit platform game about a year and a half later. Now, *Syndicate* returns to establish a franchise on the 3DO.

The player takes the role of a crime boss in a grim future where criminal syndicates rule the world. Your cadre is an up-and-coming outfit with little cash and lots of potential. The world must be taken over one country at a time, and it's your job to establish, equip and direct a team of four agents to complete missions bringing each territory under your umbrella of illicit activity.

The missions escalate in complexity. The early

scenarios are simple search-and-assassinate affairs or straightforward kidnappings. As things get more involved, one might have to "persuade" an informant to learn where the politician's wife is before rubbing her out. Multistage missions are the test of the tactician: wipe out the enemy agents, kidnap the scientist,

blow up the armored personnel carriers, find the secret weapon and make it back to the landing area. All in a day's work. Of course, spreading mayhem and destruction is no fun without the

right weaponry. Fear not: *Syndicate* has enough lethal hardware to satisfy an entire convention of NRA members, from uzis to lasers and beyond. As you may have

gathered, *Syndicate* isn't for the faint of heart, and mowing down cops and innocent bystanders may not be what every gamer is looking for. For those who don't mind spilling a little innocent blood in pursuit of Total World Domination, *Syndicate* is the best entertainment money can buy.

—John Wesley Hardin

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: American Laser Games
- SYSTEM: 3DO ■ THEME: FIVE Agents
- MEGABITS: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1 ■ LEVELS: 15



Is Liz Phair's eight-song *Juvenalia* a single? Is it an EP? It really depends how astute you've been in tracking down Liz Phair's works—i.e., if you've heard the last five tracks, previously only released on cassette. I must be growing lax on my music hunting. It's an EP to me.

Juvenalia begins with *Whip-Smart's Jealousy* (a good song from a good album) then follows up with an inspired Phair-Maternal Issue remake of the early '80s classic *Turning Japanese*. Well... classic is a loose term. Truth be told, the original's chorus from ("I'm turning Japanese, I think I'm turning Japanese, I really think so!") got repetitive damn fast. Phair and Co., however, have done a workman's job on the tune, adding depth without taking too much away from its sense of frenetic '80s synth-bop.

The last five tracks carry much more of the rough sound of *Exile In Guyville* than the more polished *Whip-Smart*. *South Dakota* has Phair mouthing the male rock star lyrics "Baby, baby, really like your hips. Man, I feel lucky tonight.

I'm gonna get stoned and run around," while adding the hilarious, "Hey, we're goin' to a rodeo town, gonna get drunk and fuck some cows."

And that's not the only time steer maintenance comes into play in *Juvenalia*—in *California*, Phair alternates between melodiously singing, "I tried to tell you before, that that's why I left California," and telling the old-bull-and-young-bull-on-top-of-the-hill joke in a faux-Joe Pesci voice.

Cow-fucking aside, *Juvenalia* is an interesting mix of old, new and even newer material—making a good addition to a Phair collection, while probably being an awful place to start in on her.

—Joe Fielder

liz phair

JUVENALIA

liz phair

liz phair

12345

liz phair



CULTURE SHOCK

MMMM...BEER

"Finally, a CD-ROM that speaks to me!"

A great title for arousing attention among the beer-swilling college crowd, *The Beer Hunter* is actually aimed at potential beer connoisseurs than power-guzzlers in search of a new drinking game to play on weekends.

A celebration of beer and more specifically, an homage to microbreweries, this disc will appeal most to the growing group of people who have recently joined the home-brewing craze.

Hosted by Michael Jackson (yeah, right, like *the* Michael Jackson is a big beer drinker), *The Beer Hunter* takes users through a narrated History and Art of Brewing. Produced by the Discovery Channel, this CD-ROM is essentially a documentary tracing the first evidence of beer in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia to the European refinement of the drink through the recent resurgence of microbreweries in the U.S.

Standard beer lingo is defined, including the difference between pilsners, lagers and ales as well as what ingredients create the distinct characteristics of each. The CD-ROM also takes a look at the brewing process in both large and small breweries but stops short of providing recipes.

Also included on the disc is a field guide and a section called resources. In the field guide, academic information on styles of beer and the regions of the U.S. where beer is brewed can be found. Neither of which is very useful or interesting, but a third section discusses characteristics to look for when tasting beer, such as appearance,

aroma, taste, mouth feel and the lingering flavor (aftertaste to you and me). This knowledge is certain to help you sound really cultured at parties before the lampshade goes over



TECH SPECS

- Discovery Channel
- Mac

your head and you start dancing on tables singing *Louie Louie*.

Jackson also lends his expertise by listing the Top 24 American microbrews, which he's compiled through his life searching for the perfect beer.

Descriptions of these beers and graphics of their labels are shown.

For beginning brewmeisters, the resources section offers lists of beer radicals, associations and even beer schools. While a good portion of the latter two sections doesn't have film footage or narrative, there is a really cool, subtle sound effect of the background noises of a saloon.

tasterfully omitting the sounds of belches echoing and patrons falling off bar stools) to get you into the spirit while you read along.

Basically, the CD-ROM is great. It looks like an old leather book with section tabs to flip from one topic to the next. A click on the bottle opener off to the side lets users review sections


and when it's time to quit, patrons are presented with your bar tab and a hearty, "Cheers!"

Unfortunately, it seems as though the technical designers of this CD-ROM were drinking while they worked, because while each narrative can be stopped or paused, there is no fast-forward or rewind. If you want to go back to hear something, you have to go all the way back to the beginning of a narrative, which can drive a person to drink.

By Mike Stokes



new mykodisc "If a bar isn't a 70 cent, what



The background of the advertisement is a vibrant, stylized illustration of the Battle Beast game world. At the top center, a large, metallic, blue and silver robot head with a glowing yellow lightning bolt through its forehead dominates the scene. Below it, the landscape is a dark, industrial cityscape with various mechanical structures, pipes, and smaller characters. On the left, a green, dragon-like creature is visible. On the right, a character in a red and black suit is seen. The overall color palette is dominated by reds, oranges, and yellows, suggesting a fiery or intense environment.

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CULTURE SHOCK

STOP AND I'LL SHOOT

PALMINATOR 2000

SAT
Day
1

MAJOR BOMB?

Let's imagine that someone was convinced by that *Encyclopedia Britannica* kid and actually bought a set of the famed books of knowledge. The postman delivers the huge package to the person's doorstep, and the buyer rips it open. To his chagrin, however, the buyer discovers a new organization strategy has been undertaken at the Britannica offices, where all of the texts are in one set of books, all of the pictures are in another set of books and all of the picture captions are in yet another set of books.

That's basically what the user is presented with by the *Space Shuttle Encyclopedia*. The information is there; it's just a more difficult job to extract it than one would like.

The amount of info contained on the disc is impressive. Texts on all sorts of shuttle-related topics, lots of

lengthy sound bites are available, as well as even a few video clips. Several different shareware programs are provided to allow the user to delve into this massive archive.

On the PC, a rudimentary text interface ties together the various shareware viewers and the images. It's very straightforward but simple enough to navigate around in. On the Mac, though, there is nothing tying together the various programs. This is fine for experienced users, but those who aren't as adept will find the process infuriating at first. Of course, with more people buying computers for the first time, there are even more opportunities for infuriation. Sound, graphics and video are great, but the average owner

In the ongoing effort to find new ways to successfully integrate full-motion video (FMV) into computer games, we now have *Paparazzi*, *Tales of Tinseltown*, from developers Museworthy, Inc.

It's generally a bad sign when the first 18 pages of a 49-page instruction booklet are devoted to loading instructions and troubleshooting tips, but *Paparazzi* is not the usual computer nightmare. It installs fairly easily and the game play is largely intuitive. The player is cast as a photographer just graduated from art school, hot to make it as a celeb snapshot

artist in Hollywood. There are six surrogate characters, comprising the usual range of Type A paparazzi personalities, and the gamer can opt to be any one of them, or all of them simultaneously (don't ask). *Paparazzi* also offers users an interesting set of tools, including the "Palminator 2000" cellular cable TV that delivers lurid info on the scene, and an art-deco camera. Stalk the stars and watch lots of semi-humorous FMV clips. Interesting mostly as a novelty.

—Bill Kunkel

TECH SPECS

- System: Windows/Mac
- Publisher: Walnut Creek



Space Shuttle Encyclopedia

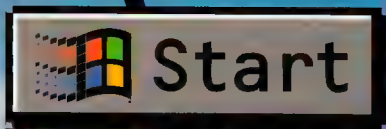
- System: Windows/Mac
- Publisher: Walnut Creek



wants some integration of these sections, which this doesn't give. For hardcore space enthusiasts, this'll be an excellent resource for research and

entertainment. This is not a product, though, which is going to fan the flames of scientific interest for anyone but the most diligent users. That's too bad, because with a little work, this could have been an excellent educational tool.

—Ed Finkler

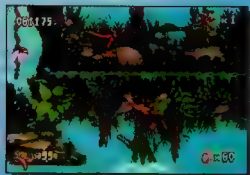


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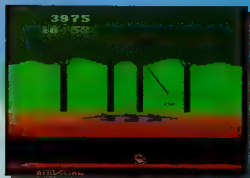
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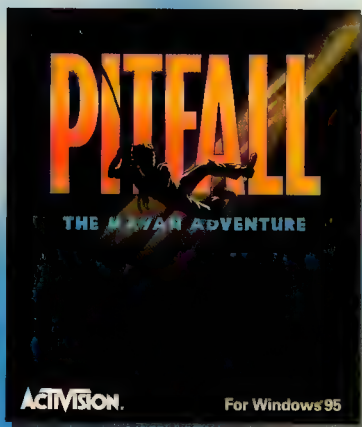
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CULTURE SHOCK



KING OF THE HELL

Doom comes a-callin' for the Super NES

It's hard to believe that there is any video game fan on the planet who hasn't played *Doom*, but it's true. While millions have played the hyper-popular computer game, fans who haven't upgraded from 16-Bit systems have been deprived of one of the most compelling video games ever made. Until now.

By way of explanation to the totally unclued, *Doom* is a science-fiction/fantasy shooter game where the player takes the role of the last surviving space Marine on Mars. In an experiment gone horribly wrong, base scientists inadvertently opened a gate to hell. The fell denizens of that realm have come pouring through, slaughtering everything in their path. It's up to you to fight the sea of adversaries, find the hell portal and close it.

What made *Doom* such a thrilling experience for computer gamers translates perfectly to the Super NES. While many, many games pit the

player against overwhelming odds, *Doom* lets you see it in first-person perspective. There are the same five levels of difficulty, from I'm Too Young to Die to Nightmare!! There are three scenarios; Knee Deep in the Dead, the Shores of Hell and Inferno, with five or six areas each.

The scenario names give a clue to what they hold. With an increasingly bigger arsenal, the player blows away an increasing number of bad guys, really bad guys: demons, mutated ex-Marines, minotaurs and worse. Fortunately, they can all be taken care of with the proper application of overwhelming firepower. Shotguns, Chain-Guns, Rocket Launchers; they're all here, all the way up to the BFG (Big F-king Gun) 9000.

Graphically, well, *Doom* for the Super NES doesn't threaten *Donkey Kong Country* for best-looking Super NES game. Things pixelate pretty badly sometimes, but fortunately this is one game whose fun factor doesn't hinge on

graphics. It also helps that the sound is great, establishing mood and pace more expertly than music in any other hundred games.

If you own *Doom* or have played a lot of it on the computer, this 16-Bit platform version won't do much for you. If, on the other hand, you've been itching to play the most influential action game of the '90s, get cracking; you've got a lot of blood to spill.

—John Wesley Hardin

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Time/Warner
- SYSTEM: SNES
- THEME: Shooter
- MEGABITS: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1



MY BROTHER FROM ANOTHER SYSTEM

Shinobi is that rarest of franchises; Sega has never produced a bad game under its name. Since the dawn of the 16-Bit era, Sega has published one superb Genesis Shinobi game and a second that was, at the least, very good. There was even a first-rate Game Gear Shinobi action-adventure.

Now comes *Shinobi Legions* for the Saturn. *Legions* is a very good action game,

fast-moving with the usual collection of exhilarating power-ups.

Shinobi and *Double Dragon* popularized the scrolling street-fight genre in the arcades and on home systems. While player-characters in this type of game don't possess the overwhelming variety of secret moves, fatalities, ad nauseam, they do get the satisfaction of moving along, battling enemies and acquiring cool power-ups and special weapons as they go.

Shinobi Legions also takes advantage of the Saturn's 32-Bit sound and graphics to produce the best looking and sounding game in the series' history—clearly making it a must-have for Saturn action fans.

—Bill Kunkel

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Vic Tokai
- SYSTEM: Saturn
- THEME: Fighting
- MEGABITS: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1



ATLZER



Azotar



Hawk



Freon



Arashi



3DO

The Semag-Resal, a vicious alien race from the Nacirema system, have conquered and invaded the earth. Scattered bands of rebels are Earth's last hope of breaking Semag rule. As one of the volunteers, your mission is to free the humans stored in stasis at each base and destroy the sentient "boss" robot. You are equipped with a bio-enhancer which increases your normal abilities, an energy shield, and your chosen weapon.

- Four digitized characters with unique abilities.
- 2 player mode can be either cooperative or competitive.
- 16 levels with 8 randomized bonus rounds.

AMERICAN
LASER GAMES, INC.

CULTURE SHOCK



RED HOT & BOTHERED

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Red Hot + Bothered: The Indie Rock Guide to Dating

■ Red Hot/Kinetic



4

TIME BANDITS

This sequel to the PC and Mac hits *The Journeyman Project* and *The Journeyman Project Turbo* features all the excellent game play and graphics of the original, but brings it all to an entirely new level.

For those not familiar with the premise, the game begins in the year 2319, where time travel is a reality. Protected for its historical research value but guarded for its disastrous potential,

the secret of time travel has been placed in the safekeeping of the Temporal Security Agency. Taking on the role of TSA agent five, the player awakes one morning to be confronted by your future self, who informs you in the year 2328 you have been falsely accused of altering history. In order to prove your innocence, you must travel through time, collecting clues from such disparate locals as Mayan

catacombs and Leonardo da Vinci's Milan design studio.

While many feel *Myst* is the best story line to date in computer gaming, the designers at Presto Studios have done an admirable attempt at unseating it, creating a game that requires at least 50 hours of play. If you're looking for another shoot-'em-up, you'll just have to look somewhere else.

—Roy Bassave

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Sanctuary Woods Interactive
- SYSTEM: Win/Mac 60
- THEME: Adventure
- MEGABITS: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

4



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CULTURE SHOCK

HEY! FIRST GEAR

As part of the popular culture, video games are subject to the whims and fads of the mass market. Fashion determines when genres and interfaces rise and fall. Eight years ago, top-down perspective car games were big in the arcades and 8-Bit market home consoles. The player looked down on the action as his car zipped around the track. Today, any survey of racing games makes it obvious that what the people want is first-person perspective or at least something down close to the car. What the people want is the experience of real racing. *Power Drive Rally* doesn't deliver it.

There are many little things that try hard to create the feel of real racing: The player can race in a variety of off-road locations in England, Kenya, etc.; the player gets to choose which car to start with and repairs must be made between each race, but the top-down perspective makes the actual driving feel more like piloting a remote control car across a minilandscape. Of course, that can be a lot of fun. Slewing the little car around hairpin turns without skidding

off is really gratifying, but that's pretty much the game's play high point.

While regular between-races maintenance is a very real part of racing, *PDR* takes the concept a little too far. Damage is rated by damage to eight separate systems on the vehicle, like lights, engine, etc. Ludicrously, running a race with no crashes at all causes minor damage to the lights and other systems. Of course, this is very realistic, but it seems overbearing because it's more realistic than the driving experience. Why subject us to the strictures of reality when we're not getting

the sensation of actually racing? If all you want to do is play with toy cars, well, anybody can sit in the mud and do that.

—John Wesley Hardin

TEST YOUR METAL

BattleTech equals heavy-metal pain. Forget about romping around a maze with a BFC 9000 or playing out those depressingly deep "interactive adventures." You want interactive, we got 60 tons of

game. Mechs can now be fully customized. This is probably the single biggest leap from the last version of this engine, and it makes a big difference. The mech customization is all point and click with an ease that belies the great power it gives you. The low points are that Activision claims this will run on a 486/66 and it will sort of. But the shot delays and other hassles make this a joke. A 486/100 is the minimum for a playable game. Most players are going to need to purchase a program mable joystick and weapons controller. There are just too many commands for the keyboard alone. But, if mechs

mech with heat-seeking missiles. Get interactive on that, pal. For those who somehow missed it, BTech is a game of the future in which 30-foot-tall robots battle it out with advanced weaponry to rule the galaxy. The graphics for this game are clean and sharp. Light is now a real factor in the game, with night missions and areas obscured by the shadow of larger objects. Texture mapping and other cool tricks make everything look about as real as it can and still move at a decent speed. Imagine about half a step below Novalogic's VoxelSpace technology and you are in the ballpark. You can now walk over objects. Any incline below about 70 degrees is short work for your mech; this means you are no longer playing on a point-and-shoot level field. Targeting is slightly more difficult than batting in a major league baseball

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Activision
- SYSTEM: PC
- THEME: Sci Fi
- MEGABITS: 30
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

are your thing, this is the most advanced mech game yet and despite some equipment hassles, is well worth taking for a quick spin around the planet.

—John Withers

Alicia Silverstone <http://www.seus-openin.ec>

id



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foretells the
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end of the
world.
It paints way
too pretty a
picture.



HEAVEN

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BEYOND
HERETIC

CULTURE SHOCK

ONE WAY



NOW ENTERING SUPER-VILLE

Many would have you believe that the comic-book superhero genre is dead or, at the very least, choking up blood. While one would be likely to believe that after seeing the non-stop parade of big breasts, big guns and carnage in most comics, but fortunately there are exceptions.

Regardless of what misuses there are of the medium currently, there's always the hope that someone will grasp the genre correctly and produce something on the level of such classic comics as Will Eisner's *Spirit*, Jack Cole's *Plastic Man* or C.C. Beck's *Captain Marvel*. Kurt Busiek may be the guy to do it. As the co-creator of the critically revered *Marvels*, Busiek has shown a knack for taking the tired old genre and making it feel much like that first time you picked up a comic as a kid.

The story in this first issue is about a superhero named Samaritan and all the tasks he has to tackle in a typical day. The reader follows inside the hero's head as he struggles more with managing his free time than the actual foes he encounters. His worries are simple enough for him, like natural disasters, saving a kitten from a tree or battling the personification of fear—and though they usually take up only a few seconds of his time, he has to manage his time to save the world all the day long. His only escape from his responsibilities are during his dreams, where he flies without any worries.

Thanks to Busiek's everyman point of view while sustaining a sense of wonder, I'm actually finding myself looking forward to future issues. That's certainly rare in the contemporary world of superhero drek that usually litters the store shelves.

—Frank Kurtz

Astro City #1

- Image Comics
- Story by Kurt Busiek
- Art by Brent Anderson
- Monthly

12345

JUST NOT



LEONARD PART 6

He's funnier than most stand-up comedians and luckier than Captain Kirk in a no-win situation.

Who is he, you say?

He's Roger Wilco, the "hero" of the popular and award-winning *Space Quest* PC. Roger came from modest beginnings, his mother worked as a janitor, while dad maintained their meager quarters.

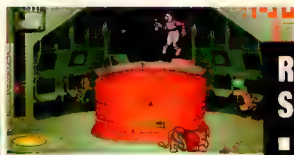
Unbeknownst to Roger, he was born a Siamese twin. Separated at birth, Roger was allowed to keep all the vital organs while his sister, Judge, was sacrificed as a non-viable twin (though strangely, survived). Roger went on to graduate at the middle of his Latent Sciences class, entering straight into StarCon after Reagan fired all space-bound janitors (hell, they were on strike). *Space Quest 6* finds Roger assigned to the vessel DeepShip 86 as a janitor.

not only to outer space, but inner space as well. Roger



is soon shrunk down to microscopic proportions and injected into the bloodstream of fellow crew member Stellar Santiago. In a humorous take on *Fantastic Voyage*, Roger must traverse Santiago's bloodstream, passing through her stomach, gall bladder and other vital organs in a roundabout way to her brain—wherein lurks the evil Sarpeo, who's ready to end her life for good.

In the past, *Space Quest* game program-



Roger Wilco: Space Quest 6

- PUBLISHER: Sierra
- SYSTEM: PC
- THEME: Comedy Adventure
- HD SPACE: 5MB
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

was maddled the game with sci-fi puns, a la the planet Delta Burkeles. SP6 is no

exception; it's littered with knocks on everything from *Fantastic Voyage* to *Outer Limits*, *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*.

If you're looking for a game that can take you away from the stress of work and life (and entertain the hell out of you in the process), then sit back, start your warp engines and engage folks.

—Roy Bar'save

THERE ARE BILLIONS OF PLANETS IN THE GALAXY.

MANY OF THEM SUPPORT INTELLIGENT LIFE.

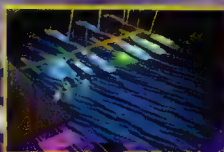
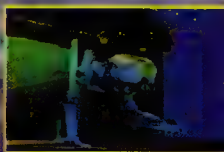
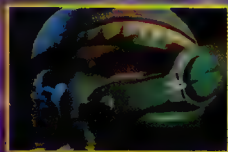
SOME OF THEM MAY WISH TO VISIT EARTH.

SOME MAY WISH TO STAY.

THEY MAY EVEN GET PUSKY ABOUT IT.

SCREW THEM.

THE RAVEN PROJECT.
KILL THEM BEFORE THEY KILL YOU.



ROMANCE BY THE CHINESE MENU

Eastern history
hits the Saturn

Koei has long mystified game players with its incredibly boring, endlessly complex Chinese historical games. From the original *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* through the most recent release, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms IV: Wall of Fire*, Koei has recycled the same tired material through a variety of scenarios. The process is entirely predictable: build cities, make allies, go to war and develop technology all through a series of endless menus.

Given that most Americans are only dimly aware of their own history, it seems unrealistic to expect them to have any interest of life in warlord-driven second-century China. And, just to make things even more difficult, there are literally 408 characters, with names that sound like "Cow Pie" and "Hung Low." There are apparently gamers out there who actually find this type of game entertaining. For the rest of us, however, it's a solid bore. —Z. Burroughs

Romance of the Three Kingdoms

- PUBLISHER: Koei
- SYSTEM: Saturn
- THEME: Historical Wargame
- MEGABITS: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1-8
- LEVELS: N/A

BLACK, WHITE, & RED ALL OVER

David Mack's intelligent comic drama continues to unfold in the fourth installment of *Circle of Blood*. Mack has established a near-future concoction of a decadent Japan ruled by the Yakuza—Japan's infamous organized crime syndicate. Maintaining the harmony between light and darkness is a cabalistic group known as the Noh. Kabuki is one of seven "sisters" who act as the strong arm of this organization.

Imbedded within the infrastructure of his plot are numerous literary allusions, references to works of George Orwell, Tolkien and Shakespeare. Mack deftly avoids the trap of honoring these and other works to the point of mere imitation.

Kabuki is something all its own.

Mack's stunning artwork is reminiscent of comics legend Frank Miller, but has more in common with the work of H.R. Giger. Mack's style continues to evolve in Act 4, attaining a uniqueness attributed to a stunning grasp of composition. The blend of visual simplicity and complexity Mack displays with *Kabuki* is a reflection of the story itself. *Kabuki*



Kabuki: Circle of Blood #4

- Caliber Comics
- Art and Story by David Mack
- Bimonthly

123 1/2 45

is the ideal synthesis of story and artwork comic creators try to attain.

Kabuki's single shortcoming is the similarities it shares with numerous neo-Japan epics that have preceded it. Any Japanese will tell you that most Westerners writing about Japan shouldn't be. Mack weaves a story superior to any in its niche, but the problem is with the niche itself. Mack's information on the culture, from the language to the history, is refreshingly accurate in light of the many attempts to tell stories set in Japan. However, Mack continues the Western tradition of portraying the behavior of the Japanese as, in the majority, morally depraved (Kai and the entire city of Kyoto) but with glimmers of nobility (Kabuki and the Noh). It makes a great story, but sadly reinforces some negative stereotypes Westerners have perpetuated since Pearl Harbor.

—John Born

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The horror mounts when you realize you're trapped in Kyan and destined to suffer the same fate as those you've seen skittering into the shadows on six legs.

Time is now your worst enemy. Find the root of these evil transformations while you still can – or drown in the seething sea of insects that is Kyan!

This single-player fantasy action adventure features an intense, branching storyline. Grisly combat with a variety of deadly attack options. Mind-bending puzzles. Treacherous traps. And ENTOMORPH is presented in state-of-the-art high-resolution graphics – with a CD-quality soundtrack that's guaranteed to make your skin crawl!



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CULTURE SHOCK

ADVANTAGE STATION

PLAY

6ame. Set. Match. Here's the first sports competition for the Sony PlayStation. *Power Serve 3-D Tennis*. As a novice to the real sport of tennis, I spend more of my time chasing the ball than hitting it—and in this game there weren't any exceptions. An ounce of patience and a little bit of practice later, however, and the game took on a whole new life.

Power Serve utilizes the full potential of the PlayStation's 32-bit technology, easily setting the tone for future real-time 3-D games with its stunning graphics. Players are allowed full 360-degree mobility on the court and a choice of

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Ocean of America
- SYSTEM: Sony PlayStation
- THEME: Sports
- MEGABITS: 1.5
- PLAYERS: 1-4
- LEVELS: N/A

4 1/2

eight top tennis seeds (Andy Legacy-U.S., Bart Sunrise-U.S., Steve Edwards-Sweden, Mike Lee-Japan/U.S., Rusty Guffiss-Germany, Angela Santos-Spain, Julia Cappuccioni-Argentina, Kumiko Abe-Japan).

The perspective is quite intense, with players taking up 3/4 of the screen with

features so lifelike, you'd swear it was Wimbledon. Each player possesses their own killer on-court arsenal, including a variety of volleys, backhands, slices, lobs and power serves.

Though the graphics are impressive, they are at times a little shaky and make the game far from easy. It's difficult even when the opponent serves (at least in real life you can hope for a lucky return). While the game takes some getting used to, like with *Virtual Pool*, it becomes incrementally easier and more exciting over time. Soon enough, you'll find yourself immersed in the spirit that is tennis.

—Roy Bassave

350



In 1978, *Larry Blyleven*, an outfielder for the 12-year Milwaukee Cream City professional baseball club, played in seven games, hit .222 in five games as a pitcher (in which he committed no errors), and had a 1-1 pitching record in 17 innings of work.

Twelve years later for the Rochester Hop Bitters, pitcher named Lede, second pitched in 1990, and won his first career, his second was in 1991. The 5'11", 177 lb., 22-year-old

also nicknamed Cannonball.

Other than baseball, these two men are not linked in any significant way.



407

PLAY BALL

...to know about them, but it's the only one which baseball historians and statisticians can't get enough, and with *Bill James Electronic Baseball Encyclopedia* for Windows, they'll be excused for it. Incredibly comprehensive, the *Baseball Encyclopedia* allows you to delve into the debates by comparing their favorite players' stats season by season or by career to determine who's the best in any statistical category imaginable. The CD-ROM also offers biographical information on players, career highlights and the top baseball stories of the month both on and off the field. Much like these old-timey *Baseball Encyclopedia*, it is not flashy, and it's made more for the guys who collect baseball cards

...the information on the back rather than the picture on the front. It contains no fluff, no audio or even still photographs of any of the players, but it's a valuable resource for checking facts. Other than player stats, the only thing that is left hidden.

Extra features are limited to a search for Hall of Famers and an option to see listings of Hall of Fame information, including a Cooperstown ballot voting year by year.

Probably the coolest use for the encyclopedia will be in conjunction with the upcoming *Baseball for Windows*. For this game, any players stats in the encyclopedia can be imported for the game. Finally, fans will be able catch a glimpse of how the stars of today might be facing the challenges of the past.

Bill James Electronic Baseball Encyclopedia

- Miller & Associates
- Windows

123 1/2

players like the Cannonball, Ticoatsy and Lede, who lived the past.

—Mike Smith

settles on my "hips." —Glenn Danzias <http://www.billyjames.com>

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CULTURE SHOCK

FOOTBALL HEROES

College sports simulation, minus beer

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
- SYSTEM: Genesis
- THEME: College Football
- MEGABITS: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1-4

Last year, this was Bill Walsh's *College Football*. Now updated and sans Mr. Walsh, CFU96 tries to satisfy both the beer & peanuts casual sports fan and the hardcore football fanatic. Too often, football games are arcade affairs that turn off the dedicated, intricate efforts that in midlife the novice. *College Football '96* has the depth to appeal to those looking for simulation, but straightforward enough that even non-sports fans can play with as little pain as possible.

CFU96 has an 108 division 1A teams, exclusive rights to four bowl games (Fiesta, Orange, Rose and Sugar), and the weather from fair to snow to windy to rain. The player can set up seasons, exhibition games, make substitutions, set rosters and adjust other minutiae down to what celebratory dance an athlete will perform when a touchdown is scored. Penalties, injuries, user records, over 400 plays and plenty of other details round out CFU96. Up to four people can play with a four-way adapter, 3-on-1, 2-vs-2 or 4 against the



preference. If CFU96 is your thing, you'll probably be very happy with it. —John Wexley Hardin

PORTRAIT OF THE SLUGGER AS A YOUNG MAN

Other than Babe Ruth, Ted Williams is arguably the greatest hitter ever to play baseball. In addition, he's been known as a selfish player, who's spit on and thrown bats at fans, yet he's also remembered for being never too busy to sign an autograph or give a rookie some hitting pointers.

In *The Legend's Own Story* CD-ROM, the paradox that is Ted Williams' life is demystified in what becomes not only a great baseball story, but a great American can story. On the first disc, Williams' autobiography, *My Turn at Bat*, cov-

ers the life of the slugger. Highlighted names and passages can be clicked on to show pictures, sound bites and newsclips from the era. Major parts of Williams' life and career are also explored from his nearly career-ending shattered elbow to the two times his career was interrupted to serve in WWII and Korea where as a pilot, he was forced to crash land after being hit by enemy fire. A narrated series of newspaper photos chronicling Williams' career and his induction into the Hall of Fame is also featured.

The second disc features *The*

Science of Hitting. Williams' instructional hitting book shows both Williams' sense of humor and contempt of pitchers with lines like, "Pitchers as a breed are dumb and hardheaded." Recent interview sessions with Williams are also included, with the legend discussing everything from hatred for the Boston press and politicians to the stupidity of the Boston Red Sox management, as well as his love for that same organization. Opinionated and confident, Williams comes off as that rare breed of man who can both talk the talk while walking the walk. Anyone who's ever pretended to hit a game-winning grand slam will be mesmerized by the Hall of Famer as he describes his final at bat, which punctuated his career with a home run. While many baseball biographies are about as dry as a resin bat, the story of Ted Williams is truly amazing. The CD-ROM rises to the occasion, and not enough good things can be said about it. While Ted Williams is best known as the last player to bat over 400, his CD-ROM bats

1,000. —Mike Stokes

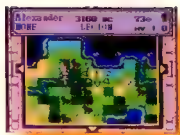
TECH SPECS

- Global Electronic Publishing
- Windows



Ted Williams: The Legend's Own Story

www.dcs.gmw.ac.uk/~job/staff/tg/index



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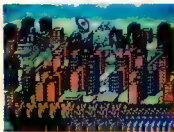
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■ PolyGram Video

12345

There are no other factors that can be considered in this case. The only factor that can be considered is the fact that the defendant is a minor.

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PLAYING HARD BALL

A photograph of a baseball player in a white uniform swinging a bat on a field. The player is in the middle of the swing, with the bat extended forward. The field is green with a brown dirt base path. In the background, there are other players in white uniforms and a crowd of spectators in the stands. The image is slightly blurry, suggesting motion.

- **PUBLISHER:** Sport Accolade
- **SYSTEM:** PC CD-ROM
- **THEME:** Sports
- **MEGABITS:** 10 or 18 with add-on
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2
- **LEVELS:** N/A

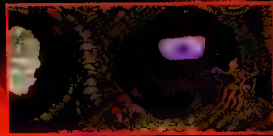
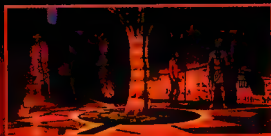
12345

html "I cross my wooden leg and I swear on m

**I HAVE NO MOUTH,
AND I MUST SCREAM**



you won't easily forget !!!



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CULTURE SHOCK

STURM & DRANG

SSI creates brave new role-playing world

RSSI needed a new role-playing world to offset the opening of the license for TSR products, and Aden, the world where *Thunderscape* takes place, is the result. Full of

your normal panoply of baddies, magic and quests, this setting has all the makings of the basic fantasy computer role-playing universe. Characters and their creation are robust. Eleven "archetypes" are provided giving all the standard classes such as healer, fighter, wizard and most other types you can think of. D&D players won't go into shock.

However, *Thunderscape* also allows you to create characters with no predefined "archetype," but instead mixing and matching skills as you see fit. You want a spell-casting, fighting, pickpocket? No problem. This is a real plus for

Thunderscape. Arbitrary classes have been with us for too long in CRPGs. Spells are a bit light for serious magic aficionados. Only 27 spells are provided. Of course, as the series progresses, we can expect more spells to surface. The engine itself is very well executed, with a first-person view showing at a glance the health and status of the party members. A number of combat and movement

options are also always available on the screen

for those who prefer to only use the mouse. Keyboard commands are also supported including good use of the number pad, making it a natural to attack using the mouse commands and move using the number pad. *Thunderscape*'s graphics give a great doom and gloom feel to the proceedings, with well-rendered monsters and backgrounds in a dreary and dark environment that really gives the

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: SSI
- SYSTEM: PC (386/486)
- THEME: RPG
- MEGABITS: 1.5
- PLAYERS: 1-8
- LEVELS: 1-20

aura of a world being invaded by dark magic. While we're just being introduced to Arden, this could turn into a very interesting playing world.

Instead of pure fantasy, there are also steam-punk elements to the game, with a steam-powered technology of a fairly high level in evidence: A steam-powered auto-crossbow is one of the more powerful standard weapons in the game. SSI has done a fine job with *Thunderscape* and it looks as if Aden could grow into a rich gaming environment.

—John P. Withers

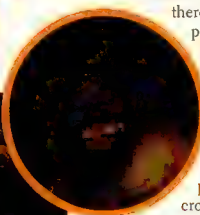


SUGARY GOODNESS

Rock has basically always been composed of three chords, which is why it's so fun to find a band that can make those same old three chords sound

refreshing and new. Bunnygrunt doesn't aspire to be anything more than a fun, light-hearted pop band, and they completely succeed at that goal, which is a lot harder than it looks. A three-piece from St. Louis, Mo., Bunnygrunt is almost the musical equivalent of Hello Kitty—irresistibly cute and charming. But that much cuteness could be cloying if

the songs on Action Pants weren't well executed and done with a sense of humor, and certainly no one can accuse the 'grunsters of taking them seriously. "How can you do this to me/I was born in 1973" goes one typical lyric, answered by a fellow band member singing, "I wouldn't know, I was born in one-nine-seven-oh." The sugary pop songs on the eight-song record do get a bit repetitive, but harder rocking feedback tests like *g i 2k* and the Velvet Underground riff on the 12-minute long *Open Up and Say Oblina* show a bit of the lurking edge within Bunnygrunt's music. All in all, Bunnygrunt's music is about as substantial as a popsicle, and just as sweet. A popsicle might not last long, but it sure is a treat on a hot summer day. —Mo Ryan



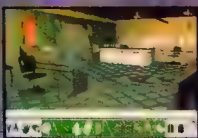
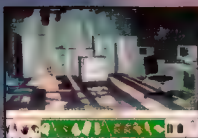
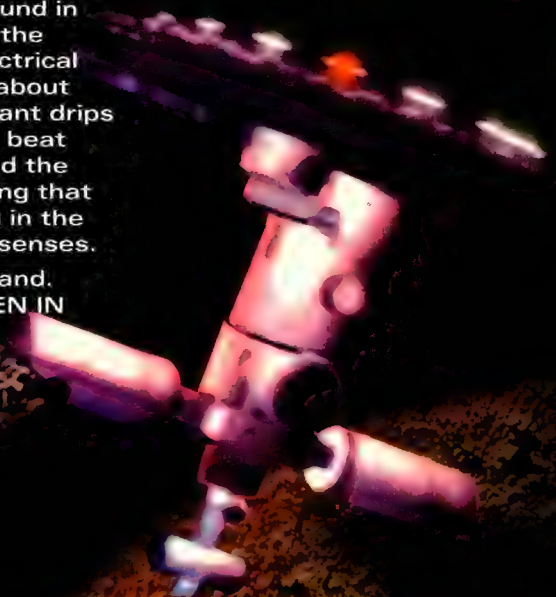
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PlayStation



CULTURE SHOCK

ERASER HEAD?

Tom Thumb Mondo Bizarro

I imagine if David Lynch had decided to make *Eraserhead* as a stop-motion animated picture and you'll get an idea what this little gem is like.

Director Dave Borthwick has created a world absolutely as creepy as can be. In a crumbling city crawling with countless insects, a poor couple has an incredibly small child, who they name Tom Thumb. From this point on, Tom goes through a series of bizarre adventures (though he's really a pawn to whomever he's with). Along the way we see this new strange world through the eyes of the wee lad, and it's not at all pleasant.

Adding to the pervasive weirdness of this film is that every single thing, human, insect or otherwise is stop-motion animated. Borthwick doesn't use models of human beings, he uses real full-size human beings who move along in weird claymation style. One can barely imagine what an agonizing feat that must have been for the actors. It's worth it though, since all the while the human characters are doing things, animated bugs are crawling across the walls or tiny people walking under foot. Tom exists only as an animated walking fetus-like creature cooing to his father. With Borthwick's technique, there is no need for mattes. As a result, the world with all its visual weird-

ness works very well and every character regardless of how it was created belongs on screen side-by-side.

At times, the story plays like a traditional fairy tale. At other times, it takes on a sinister, dystopian, science-fiction air. At other times...it's just strange.

The effect of simply

everything being out of kilter creates a relentless nightmare-like atmosphere. Ultimately, it's hard to categorize this film. The only film it bears even a passing resemblance to is Lynch's *Eraserhead*, and even that's slight. It's definitely worth viewing, just prepare to get a little creeped out.

—Frank Kurtz

THE SECRET ADVENTURES OF TOM THUMB

Manga Entertainment

12345



LET YOUR FINGERS DO THE SURFING

I all know the type. They usually inhabit the dark recesses of a college computer lab, sitting in the office marked

"Consultant." They're knowledgeable, irritable (especially when you ask a question) and lack even basic social skills.

Most disgusting of all, though, is the supreme amount of time they have to search out all the hidden coves of the silicon sea and sail home to brag to their friends about it.

Those of us who have a life can't take the time to play modern-day Ulysses, so we must get back at the little geeks any way we can. Luckily, the marketing of the Internet has brought with it various guidebooks for sightseers and information seekers. The drawback with this approach is the ever-changing nature of the Net. Archives are shifting all over the place; sites are going up and down. It's a mad world, and the print medium just can't keep up.

Microforum's *Internet Connection* is basically the Internet Yellow Pages on CD-ROM, with a nice menu system and a few multimedia touches to make you think that your Soundblaster was't a complete waste of money. Some short video clips introduce some of the

screens. They maintain a generally jovial atmosphere throughout the proceedings so that even when one's looking for information about Stalin's regime of terror, a duck with

MICROFORUM'S

INTER
NET
CONNECTION

The Complete Internet Yellow Pages

123456789

an oversized mallet is guaranteed to bring a chuckle. They do slow down the process, though, so the toggle switch is appreciated.

The test of such a guide, though, is the information within. While some subjects seem covered adequately, a few seem skimmed on. Beyond that, there's still the problem of the static nature of a guide like this. It would be optimal if the user could add new discoveries and delete old sites, but there is no provision for something like that.

As it stands, this is a nice tool for users to have available on their Windows desktop, but it doesn't address the major problems that plagued its print brethren. There's still no substitute for gobs of free Net time.

—Ed Finkler

Internet Connection

■ PUBLISHER: Microforum ■ SYSTEM: Windows

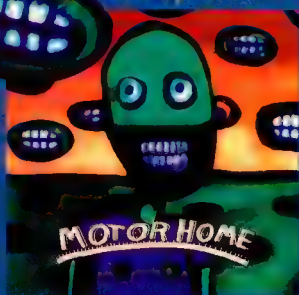
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...please. — Tom waits

ON WHEELS

Motorhome proves R.V. is the way to be

Latching to the extended debut by Motorhome is like taking a ride on a roller coaster. There are ups and downs and thrills aplenty and the overall feeling produced by the experience is giddy excitement. A popular live act in their hometown of Chicago for a couple of years now, the band has taken the songs honed to perfection on stage and used the studio to transform them into almost new creations. Producer Dave Trumbore obviously shares the band's gleeful pop-rock sensibilities, and together



Motorhome *Sex Vehicle* 12341/2

■ Sex Vehicle ■ Disc

by and the band have taken Breckers-style tuneful alternative rock and made it into something truly strange yet sublime. The disc opens with a soothing voice telling listeners that the record is full of subliminal positive messages that will help improve your life and make it more successful. These are deliciously catchy hooks for the first song, "Sweet Valentine."

...dies in, and the album's constant over-
comes. Superstar and Hell's Belly make
a journey to the swirling
obsession and neurosis, and a
Tasty love, an intricate Hawaiian-
sounding four-track cover of silence, brings
back to where they started— and
the giddy melody begins all over again.
Guitarist Josiah Masurini and his cohorts
drummer Laura Masura and bassist Kristie
Thiele, bring uninhibited glee and commitment
to the recording process, and it shows
in every slightly distorted note. *Sex Vehicle*
is an accomplished debut, as well as one of the
best first recordings of the year.



<http://www.digimark.net/The>

Charles
MANSON

JEFFery
DAHMER

AL
CAPONE

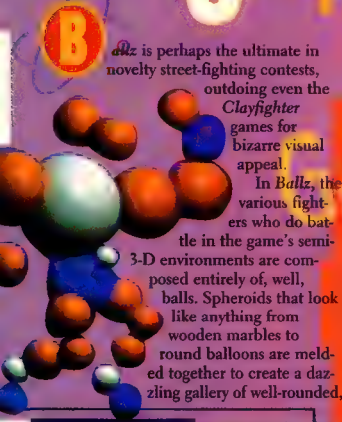
Jack
The
RIPPER

ALL
PUSSIES

LOADED

CULTURE SHOCK

DO YOU HAVE BALLZ?



Balz is perhaps the ultimate in novelty street-fighting contests, outdoing even the Clayfighter games for bizarre visual appeal.

In Balz, the various fighters who do battle in the game's semi-3-D environments are composed entirely of well, balls. Spheroids that look like anything from wooden marbles to round balloons are melded together to create a dazzling gallery of well-rounded,

slightly animated fighters. There are the usual special moves (explosions and cyclones among them), and lots of extremely rude "taunting" gestures that actually do damage to the fighter being dissed: The big payoff: When a fighter is defeated, they fall apart, dissolving into their component spheres.

The "Director's Cut" tag refers to the fact that, unlike the earlier Genesis and SNES versions of this game, the 3DO edition gives players extensive control over the display. Fighters can be viewed from almost any angle, from top down to in your face.

Does the idea of character fatalities resembling the aftermath of a snapped pearl necklace turn you on?

— Bill Kunkel

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Panasonic
- SYSTEM: 3DO
- THEME: Fighting Game
- MEGABITS: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1-2
- LEVELS: N/A



LIPS

FLAMBE

People who think they know the Flaming Lips because they heard last summer's heavy rotation hit *She Don't Use Jelly* have a surprise in store for them: Jelly is not as indicative of the Lips' recently twisted take on reality, but the minimalist ditty doesn't prepare people for the full-on psychedelic ear party that is a Flaming Lips record. To experience that, groove on down to your record store, pick up this disc and get ready for a head trip.

Forget about all those songs you hear on the radio concerning love, girls, angst and other Gen-X topics. The Flaming Lips want to tell you about watermelon guns, laughing giraffes and outer-space journeys gone awry. *Clouds Taste Metallic* is the musical equivalent of a Christmas tree—from afar it kind of seems like

another Christmas tree, but up close you find that it's strewn with all sorts of weird and quirky bauble. The song titles, including *Psychiatric Exploration of the Fetus with Needles*, *Guy Who Got a Headache* and *Accidentally Saves the World and Places*.

Headwound, give you a little taste of the off-kilter alternate reality that the Lips explore with their jaunty *White Album*-meets-

Nevenmind tunes. The truth is, despite their sublime ability to rock out, the Flaming Lips are not really a rock band. They are emissaries from another planet who've been sent here to get us out of taking life so seriously and to make us, well, get freaky.

With irresistibly demented songs like "No Resistance Is Futile," — Mo'Nique

Flaming Lips

- Clouds Taste Metallic
- Warner Bros.

12345



END



Machiavellian comp or tribute to depression?

Rejoice, makers of black hair dye—this compilation will expose a whole new generation to the doom-and-gloom sounds of Joy Division, one of rock's most influential bands.

Emerging from the grimy industrial city of Manchester, England, in the late 1970s, the somber yet infinitely compelling Joy Division changed the course of post-punk music, and its synthesizers and bass-driven melodies paved the way for everything from techno-goths like Nine Inch Nails to moody alternarockers like Morphine, to name just a few of the hundreds of bands influenced



include *Day of the Lords* by Honeymoon Stitch (otherwise known as Dave Navarro of *Jane's Addiction* and Chad Smith of the *Red Hot Chili Peppers*) and the absolute classic *Love Will Tear Us Apart* by Stanton Miranda (I don't know who they are, but they turn in a fine effort). Other contributors include techno/rave star Moby and the Star Children, whom you might be familiar with under their usual name, the Smashing Pumpkins. If you don't know much about Joy Division, this compi-

A Means To An End: The Music of Joy Division

■ Virgin 12345

by the rhythmic, driving J.D. sound. The focal point of the group was singer Ian Curtis, whose moody baritone resonated through the

band's dark songs like a gloomy church organ on an overcast Sunday afternoon. Curtis committed suicide in 1980, and since then his work with Joy Division has become a touchstone for alternative artists, many of whom are represented on *Means to an End*. The opening track, in which Girls Against Boys takes on the classic *She's Lost Control*, is an amazing display of controlled fury and stands head and shoulders above the generally fine quality of the other songs on the compilation. Other highlights



lation, as well as a fine new "best-of" J.D. compilation album called *Permanent* (Qwest Records), will serve as more than adequate introductions to the band, and if you're already a fan, these two discs are reminders of just how much modern music owes the revolutionary Manchester foursome.

—Mo Ryan



CULTURE SHOCK

QUARTERBACK CHEESE

WITH

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Acclaim
- SYSTEM: Sega 32X
- THEME: Sports

- MEGABITS: 24
- PLAYERS: 1-5
- LEVELS: N/A

12345

In December and the NFL Season is near its end—does your favorite team have hometown advantage, or are they at home barbecuing kielbasa and commiserating with one another about the 1-15 season?

Well, no matter, for you can enjoy your own NFL pre- and postseason when you engage the 24 legs of bone-crunching power in *NFL Quarterback Challenge*, perhaps the best 32X sports game to date. Players are treated to a scrolling perspective (allowing for better viewing of deep receptions), texture-mapped fields and updated player attributes, all of which set new standards for console football realism.

The game uses a 35-degree, 40-yard over-the-shoulder field of view. Gamers can select from among 19 of the NFL's top quarterbacks including: Troy Aikman

and John Elway to compete in Exhibition, Pre-Season, Regular Season, Play-Off and Pro-Bowl tournaments. What makes the game work is its realistic AI that thinks like Don Shula

or Jimmy Johnson, as well as the players very true-to-life moves, speed, weight, agility and strength. If you wish, you may also exercise divine intervention to control weather and field conditions. Snow in Miami or rain in Arizona? Here's the kicker (no pun intended)—you receive a playbook built into your game with more than 430 offensive



and defensive plays, plus "Quarterback Signature Plays" like "The Steve Young's downfield screen." For extracurricular, the field view enters the esteemed Quarterback Challenge where you

have the opportunity to test your video game football skills against other NFL quarterbacks like Dan Marino, John Elway and Warren Moon among others. Best of all, *Quarterback Challenge* lets you import your own QB and import him into the regular season. Not even *John Madden Football* can do that.

—Roy Bassave



When the first "World Championship Game" (the term Super Bowl wasn't applied until the

fourth of these events) was played on Jan. 15, 1967, the most expensive ticket sold for a measly 12 bucks and only half the stadium was full. Nearly 30 years later, U.S. Gold's *Super Sunday* CD-ROM showcases some of the greatest moments in the game's history, along with the records, rings, ticket stubs and a football novice section explaining referee signals.

Finding the Super Bowl of your choice from I through XXXIX, NFL commentator Pat Summerall delivers a brief synopsis of the game accompanied by still photographs. Options are then given to review footage of game highlights for both teams, even in the most lopsided victories, and team rosters and complete game summaries are also available.

SUPERBOWL SHUFFLE

On the first decade disc, nostalgic football fans can visit the fumanchu era of Broadway Joe and his miracle Jets, while the second decade disc brings back the headband billboard era of the punky QB and his running refrigerator. The third disc brings fans to the present era where



the phrase, "Neon signs," has taken on a completely different meaning.

Super Sunday also documents the best of football's modern era on both sides of the ball from Doomsday Defense and Monsters of the Midway to the high-octane offenses of Montana and Young.

Licensed through Team NFL, NFL Films and the NFL Players Association, the design of the three-disc set is of the highest quality, both technically and visually. Some of the earliest game footage seems overly grainy, and the film clips are without Summerall commentary, leaving them a little flat.

For a die-hard football fan, however, little else holds the grandeur of the Super Bowl and this CD-ROM is a worthy complement to any collection.

—Mike Stokes

Official Super Bowl Commemorative Edition

- DiscUs
- Windows

12345

ROGER RABBIT

Battle Beast is a brawlin' pedigree pooch

B

attle Beast begins with a Saturday morning-like cartoon that brings players up to date on the machinations of "the evil toadman." From there begins one of the most...animated fighting games ever seen.

Players soon find themselves in the thick of things, taking on numerous opponents, against which they can use over 100 moves. With a bit of searching, one may discover the secret rooms full of special moves and advanced weaponry (such as



TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: 7th Level
- SYSTEM: PC
- THEME: Fighting
- MEGABITS: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1-2
- LEVELS: N/A

freeze rays and flame throwers). Players maneuver their way through a maze-like array of sewer tunnels to fight scenarios called "war zones." The winner of the six main war zones (the *only* one to advance to the toadman's lair) must find the secret entrance to his laboratory for the final battle. Having the right weapons, energy level and secret moves are your only chance of winning.

While playing, keyboard combinations are used to interactively "taunt" opponents with phrases such as "you're weak" or "you're a wimp!" *Battle Beast* is packed with more than 8,000 frames of hand-drawn, feature-quality animation (five times more cels than other fighting games), digitally inked and painted by the same artists who worked on episodes of *Beavis & Butt-head* and *Ren & Stimpy*. The resulting effect is fight moves that are more fluid, extremely graphic expressions and realistic reactions. This is a one-of-a-kind fighting game with graphics rivaled only by Disney animation.

—Roy Bassave

WHAT
GOOD
IS A
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CULTURE SHOCK

No Apology Game
Ratings By FUSION
& Guest Editors

RECAP

CONSOLE

PC

GAME

RATING

GAME

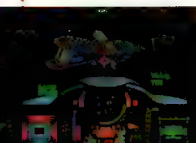
RATING

	R. Bassave	H. Grossman (Editor EGM)	A. Katz	B. Kunkel
Air Combat (PlayStation)	4	3	-	2
Battle Arena Toshinden (PSX)	5	4	4	-
Blackfire (Saturn)	4	3	2	2
Bloody EyeGouger (92X)	0	1	0	0
Bug (Saturn)	5	4	4	4
ComixZone (Genesis)	3	4	5	3
Hell (3DO)	3	3	2	1
Judge Dredd (SNES)	3	3	2	2
Kileak (PSX)	3	3	2	-
Myst (Saturn)	5	3	4	4
The Ooze (Genesis)	3	2	-	2
Raiden Project (PSX)	4	3	4	3
Rayman (PSX)	4	4	3	3
Romance...IV (SNES)	-	-	4	2
Ridge Racer (PSX)	5	4	4	4
Shadow Squadron (32X)	4	-	4	2
Shinobi Legions (Saturn)	3	4	4	3
Slam 'N Jam '95 (3DO)	5	-	4	3
Smurf Apocalypse (16U)	2	5	5	0
Space Pirates (3DO)	3	2	1	1
Triple Play '96 (Genesis)	4	-	4	2
Weapon Lord (SNES)	3	3	-	-
Wild Woody (Sega CD)	3	2	-	2
Wing Com. III (3DO)	4	4	4	3

	R. Bassave	S. Honeywell (Editor C&G)	S. Kent	B. Kunkel
Ascendency	3	4	3	-
Blood Bowl	3	4	3	-
Casino Deluxe	-	3	3	3
Celtic Tales	3	4	-	2
Chaos Control	4	3	-	2
Die Fascist Pig	3	3	3	3
DiscWorld	3	4	-	-
Final Unity	5	4	4	2
Full Throttle	5	4	5	4
Ishar 3	3	1	-	-
Jagged Alliance	4	4	-	-
The Journeyman...2	5	3	4	2
Lost Eden	4	3	4	2
MechWarrior II	5	5	3	-
Phantasmagoria	4	-	4	3
Re-elect JFK	5	2	3	-
Slipstream 5000	4	3	3	3
SpaceQuest VI	5	4	3	3
Super Street Fighter II	3	3	1	2
Terminal Velocity	4	4	-	3
Ultimate Doom	5	3	3	3
Virtual Log Rolling	5	5	5	5
Virtual Pool	5	4	4	4
X-Com II	3	5	-	-

scale: 1-5 (5=best)

scale: 1-5 (5=best)





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functions

F-16 Combat Stick
14 functions,
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used with the
Pro Throttle

F-16 Night Stick
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Pro Throttle
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functions. Makes other
standard joysticks
programmable as well.
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CH Throttle
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functions

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External Correspondence

3DO REDEMPTION FUSION,

In general I was disappointed with the gloomy picture you painted for the 3DO. You concentrated on the dark past, but failed to show the light at the end of the tunnel. The fact is, at present, 3DO is doing better than it ever has, reporting healthy sales even in the slow season of the summer. There has been a consistent release of games, albeit no landmark games per say, but fun games nonetheless. With the new \$299 price, and strong software lineup, upcoming advertising in mags and TV, 3DO seems to be doing a lot of things RIGHT. It is unbalanced articles like yours that will undermine any good momentum 3DO has built up. A person reading your 3DO article will most likely form a negative opinion of the 3DO, and won't even give it a chance, because you didn't give them all the facts!

Larry L. Stewart
—Plasmorg—
Plasmorg AOL.@com

GATES SHMATESI

Dear FUSION,

Microsoft, Microsoft, Microsoft! When will this fascination with Bill Gates end? Yes he's young, interesting and he's incredibly rich but do these attributes warrant endless press and attention? Maybe it's time to evaluate his products. I know

for a fact that the new Macintosh operating system Copeland is going to make Windows 95 look like crap for at least four to five years until they can catch up to the Mac's level.

All I have to say is people should buy the best product out there based on performance and not on hype surrounding the owner of the company

Jamie Finn
Portland, ME

We agree with you Jamie, but that won't stop us from plastering his picture all over our mag every month.



KOMBAT VETERAN

FUSION Editors,

Excellent piece on Mortal Kombat's Kano—Rich Divizio. I think it's incredible the way people can become famous from being a character in a video game! What's next, maybe web sites that feature their owners will rocket them to fame? Of course web surfers never leave the house so they would never spot anybody anyway.

Keep up the good work FUSION dudes.

Gunter Hansen
Battlecreek, MI

THE DOLE EFFECT

Dear Sirs

Thank you for your excellent article on Bob Dole.

So many "popular culture" magazines feel threatened by what Dole has to say and choose to attack him.

It was very refreshing to see a (new) magazine take the high road and actually analyze what Candidate Dole was trying to say. I look forward to my next issue.

David M. Westhart
Richland, WA

David, we try to offer both sides of most arguments unless, of course, we're talking about bitchin' rides—Chevy rules!

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FALL OUT

MIGHTY BULLOCKS
FUSION.

Sandra Bullock is incredible! I really did not expect to see her in the pages of *FUSION* but I must say I am pleasantly surprised.

The Net and other movies cashing in on the computer/information highway craze are interesting but still need some solid writing to be really successful. I want to see *The Net* basically to see Sandra Bullock. I'm not sure if I would have gone if it were not for her. I guess there are a lot worse things to base movies on than computers. Keep up the movie coverage as much as possible but please don't become *Film Threat*!

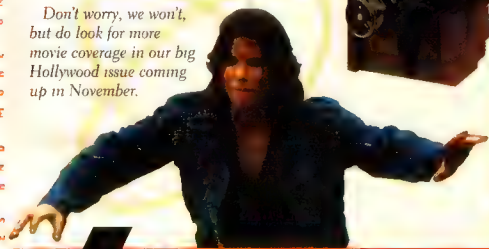
Allen Robinson
Chicago, IL

THE JIG IS UP
FUSION.

You guys have diversified your magazine well. I have been happy with the new sections like Reactor and Culture Shock, but I haven't seen a damn thing about precision Jig grinders yet!

Jack Pardy
Kenosha, WI

Now you know we
aim to please, Jack.
Look for a review
on the Moore
G-15 Precision Jig
Grinder in our
December
issue, just
in time for
the lovely
holiday
season.



REACH OUT:
http this:

- ◆ **Dysfunctional Family Circus** (<http://www.cis.upenn.edu/~mjd/dfc/dfc.html>) This veteran site is still one of the funniest to behold. A dark twist on the ever-trite Family Circus comic strip, net-goers can insert their own mischievous captions.
- ◆ **Gateway to Darkness** (<http://coel.engr.umbc.edu/~vijay/home.html>) This gothic web server entombs the dire sounds, images and clips of the dreadful dead. For nyctophiles.
- ◆ **The Virtual Pet Cemetery** (<http://www.lavamind.com/pet.html>) If your thoughts are haunted by Bugsy the Iguana's unceremonious toilet-flushing burial, fret no more. The Virtual Pet Cemetery will allow pet-owner widowers to properly inter their beloved in cyberspace tombs. Simply e-mail epitaphs to: pet@lavamind.com.
- ◆ **And Don't forget to check out more at** <http://www.Transfusion.com>

♦ **Gateway to Darkness** (<http://coel.engr.umb.edu/~vijayl/home.html>) This Gothic web server entombs the dire sounds, images and clips of the dreadful dead. For nuctophiles.

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THE



and 1.5 mm for the head, thorax and abdomen, respectively. The body is black, covered with a dense covering of fine, white, branched hairs. The head is black, with a broad, white, transverse band across the face. The eyes are large, black, and prominent. The antennae are long, black, and segmented. The legs are black, with the tibiae and tarsi being lighter in color. The wings are black, with a broad, white, transverse band across the middle. The abdomen is black, with a broad, white, transverse band across the middle. The body is covered with a dense covering of fine, white, branched hairs.



It seems that everything and everyone is bound for on-line publishing these days from self-help guides to origami instructional sites. Why should comic books be any different? Released with the long-awaited Microsoft Network, Virtual Comics On-line promises to bring a whole new team of superheroes to the Net.

Leading the chin-up charge for MSN is Director and Editor in Chief of Virtual Comics Danny Fingerth, the erstwhile mother wit behind Marvel's Spider-Man line. "Think of it as a newsstand of new comics," says Fingerth who'll be penning *They Call Me...the Skul*, to be designed and penciled by Ron Lim.



Marvel Comics, in association with Toy Biz, Inc. has also played its hand at interactive publishing with CD-ROM comic books. Sound effects, zoom-in and zoom-out abilities, and trivia games will, ostensibly, enhance the reading experience for consumers. The first of a series of releases include: *Spider-Man*, *X-Men*, *Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man*. Each title will contain more than 80 pages of digitally re-colored action, although beware the many merchandising traps—Marvel has made sure to include tie-ins to their television shows and other nifty corporate products.

In response to Marvel's CD-ROMs, Fingerth vaunts chat rooms, a growing library and collectors material. "Virtual Comics will become the one-stop comic book place. ●

Microsoft in the MOVIES

Bill Gates has been known to be a little more than a little bit of a techie. After appearing in a *Crossroads* television ad that aired during Microsoft's 30-minute Windows 95 infomercial, Hollywood insiders say the \$13.5 billion man exhibited a yearning for the little thespian that lay within.

Currently, Gates is leveraging his influence with DreamWorks SKG to strongarm some lead male roles for himself, including: *A Room With a View*, *Mr. Windows 95*, *Lord Who's Talking Once Again* (Bill plays the voice of a computer), *DOS Boot*, *Heaven's Gate II*, *Oh God, I'm Rich!* (replacing veteran George Burns as God), *Ruthless in Seattle*, *Kobe's Gate*, *Next Windows 95*, and *My Own Private Idaho* (an endearing story about a guy who's so rich, he decides to purchase his own state).

FUSION managed to sneak an exclusive peak at some of the other films Gates presently has in production. ●



Trustbusters

Ramis, Gates and Akroyd cross the plasma-bundling beams on one nasty Janet Reno spook in an effort to save capitalism.



Bill Gates & Ted's Excellent Adventure

Reeves stars opposite Gates in this wacky tale of two teenage dimwits who write an operating system.



Ted Turner & Hooch

Ted Turner's decolorization process turns this cop-dog buddy movie into an instant classic. Gates gives voice to the dog, Dollar.



In Search of Stock

To boldly buy what no man has bought before...Gates as captain of his billion-dollar *Enterprise* leads a team of space investors.

System Junkies: Admitting you have a problem is the first step

In the 17 years I've spent in the electronic gaming industry, the most curious of all the phenomenon I've encountered is the strange and intense partisanship that users develop toward different hardware companies.

There are Sega rooters and Nintendo rooters and even an extremely vocal segment of Atari partisans. Beat the woods hard enough and you may even flush out a cadre of Neo-Geo or Turbo Duo supporters. These fans snatch up each and every product produced by these companies the instant they hit the retail shelves. They then talk them up, and, most important of all, ridicule products from "enemy" companies.

This sort of loyalty is a distinctly human response. When we invest time and money in a piece of technology, we soon find that we have an emotional investment in that product's ongoing success.

But as time marches on, I see more and more of the ugly flip side to this near-mindless devotion. For example, each time devoted Sega minions are burned by a ridiculous new doorstop, their loyalty is thrust into a crucible, where it melts and hardens into a new entity: Company Hatred.

"I was absolutely devoted to Sega," one former Sega slave told me recently. "I bought the T-shirts, read Sega Visions, told everyone that Sega ruled. Hell,

I even watched those terrible Sonic the Hedgehog cartoons. I knew the Genesis was the way-coolest machine, and I loved those 'Say-Gah' commercials."

I nodded. The profile was

familiar. "So what happened?" I asked. "What turned your hunk of burning love into a lump of smoldering hatred?"

He sighed. "I guess it was the Game Gear that started it. I liked the Game Gear, it was a neat system. But the games were mostly terrible, and as soon as Sega realized they weren't gonna take out the Game Boy," he winced at this point, a reflex action he repeated whenever a Nintendo product was mentioned, "Sega seemed to give up on it. Less and less software arrived, more and more of it stunk. But it still didn't really put a dent in my love for all that was Sega. So, when they announced the Sega CD, I was at the front of the line at Electronics Boutique on

the first day it went on sale."

"That must've been...a pretty tough experience," I consoled. "What?" he asked sarcastically. "You mean getting a bunch of rotten games with ragged FMV, stuff that was below the standards of the Genesis? Yes, Bill, that was pretty tough. But you know, I'm pretty tough, too. So I...I..."

"Go ahead. Say it. You'll feel better."

"I bought the...32X," he finally blurted out "I've now got three damn plugs coming off my Genesis and I still don't have any decent games to play!" At this point, his chest began to heave and all I could do was show him Panzer

Dragoon and Total Victory Soccer on the Saturn. His eyes began to brighten immediately. "H-how much is the Saturn?" he asked. Then in a small voice: "I was looking at one yesterday." Yes, it's hard to lose the loyalty of system fanatics, but that doesn't seem to stop the major companies from trying.

How about that Super Game Boy, for example, Nintendo's silly peripheral for those dozens of near-blind Game Boy fans who wanted to see what the games actually looked like, to their everlasting horror?

Now Nintendo is planning to drop the Virtual Boy in our laps. This white elephant has drawn raves from the mainstream press, with CNN's "showbiz" know-nothings proclaiming it as "virtual reality for the masses" and *Entertainment Weekly*, a magazine that has a handle on everything in pop culture except electronic entertainment, declared the Virtual Boy: "a triumph—the most striking innovation in mass-market electronic gaming since...the NES." In reality, of course, this is a device that is neither "virtual" (it's actually single-color 3-D) nor a "boy" (it is not portable and must be mounted on a tripod). And the beat goes on.

As we've seen, it's a hard thing to turn around a true fan, but the current deluge of poor product is doing it, slowly but surely.

Love turned to hate is an ugly thing to see. ●

"What turned your hunk of burning love into a lump of smoldering hatred?"

SHINOB!

LEGIONS™

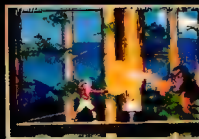
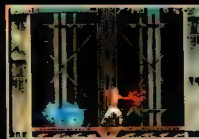
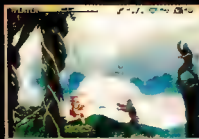
BLOOD IS THICKER THAN WATER.

Sho & twin brother Kazuma don't think so.

Kazuma's got a vendetta against him, and has made arrangements with several mercenaries to wipe him off the face of this earth. A bit bitter you say...

Obviously someone wasn't treated right when they were growing up.

Sometimes you just can't depend on family.



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Rich Heimlich is a low-down, no good, dirty, son-of-a.....shut yo' mouth!

I'm just talkin' 'bout Rich, baby.

Admitting other people have a problem is the second step

Another FUSION column about copy protection? You bet! The issue at hand is the broken promise publishers made to consumers a few years back. It was a time when publishers had serious packaging problems. Floppies took more space than standard boxes allowed and their weight added substantially to shipping costs. It was around that time that CD-ROMs first came on the scene. Their initial sale was slow and publishers moved to create consumer interest in CD-ROM drives. Publishers promised: "CD-ROMs are far more cost effective than floppies and that savings is something we can pass on to our customers." Publishers succeeded in creating interest CD-ROMs and CD-ROM drives are now everywhere. The customer, however, is paying the same if not more for games. Where are the savings? (Please, save the e-mail to me about the increased costs in other areas. Sure, games have become bigger and more expensive to produce. That's another issue.) The market sets the price and that price is all consumers will bear (currently around \$69).

Examples of price gouging are flagrant. Why should a Sega CD version of hockey cost as much as the cartridge version? Oh, because they threw in a commercial and a few silly video sequences? The CD-ROM costs pennies to press while the cartridge runs more than \$10 to pro-

duce. Next time leave the silly video out and pass the savings on to us. This reminds me of the *Seinfeld* episode where George, while having sex with his secretary, shouts out, "I'm giving you a raise!", and feels compelled to live up to the promise. Well developers, you

did the moaning and now you've got that guilty, tell-tale smile on your face. It's time to be responsible about this and live up to the promise. Or was this just another case of "wham-bam thank you ma'am"? Do I expect publishers to roll back prices and honor their promise? Madonna would be more likely to join a convent. Never fear though, I have a way for them to make amends; get rid of those ridiculous, legalistic, mumbo-jumbo licenses included with PC games. The time has come for the Family License. Why shouldn't my wife and I be able to share a game program? Blockbuster doesn't charge us twice to buy a video. Next time I buy a product, I should be allowed to install it a few times, instead of just once. Let game publishers figure out new copyright details (their legal departments need something to do), and we'll just consider things even.

If you think I'm totally off my rocker, here's some more food for thought. A decade ago I was involved with the makers of a hugely successful product called NFL Challenge (XOR). The game initially sold for as much as \$129, but you got one classy, hell of a packaged product for that. The irony was that while the game itself

was a best-seller, the yearly updated data disks (with new stats) were outselling the total number of games more than 15-to-1. In other words, there were a lot of illegal copies out there. Did XOR mind? Not at all. They were now making \$19.95 a pop on the ancillary

disks. Unofficially, XOR condoned giving away copies of the game itself, realizing that they'd make even more money on the inevitable sales of the higher profit data disks. The concept worked and XOR reached customers they'd have never reached if they copy-protected the game.

I too have utilized this unofficial policy. I readily admit that I gave a family member a popular golf game.

He'd have never bought the game on his own. Now, however, he buys every new course disk that comes out for the game and has talked several friends into buying it as well. So, for the sale of that one game I purchased, that publisher has now sold several more copies of the game and dozens more course disks. And I'm the criminal? At least I'm not the hypocrite. ●

Heimlich Maneuver

duce. Next time leave the silly video out and pass the savings on to us. This reminds me of the *Seinfeld* episode where George, while having sex with his secretary, shouts out, "I'm giving you a raise!", and feels compelled to live up to the promise. Well developers, you

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